The Pechenegs: Nomads in the Political and Cultural Landscape of Medieval Europe

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The Pechenegs: Nomads in the Political and Cultural Landscape of Medieval Europe

By

Aleksander Paroń

Translated by

Thomas Anessi

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Cover illustration: Pechenegs slaughter prince Sviatoslav Igorevich and his "Scythians". The Madrid manuscript of the Synopsis of Histories by John Skylitzes. Miniature 445, 175r, top. From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository.

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Τοῖσι γὰρ μήτε ἄστεα μήτε τείχεα ἦ ἐκτισμένα, ἀλλὰ φερέοικοι ἐόντες πάντες ἔωσι ἱπποτοξόται, ζῶντες μὴ ἀπ᾽ ἀρότου ἀλλ᾽ ἀπὸ κτηνέων, οἰκήματά τε σφι ἦ ἐπὶ ζευγέων, κῶς οὐκ ἂν εἴησαν οὗτοι ἄμαχοι τε καὶ ἄποροι προσμίσγειν;

For when men have no established cities and fortresses, but all are house-bearers and mounted archers, living not by tilling the soil but by cattle-rearing and carrying their dwellings on waggons, how should these not be invincible and unapproachable?

HERODOTUS, *History*, IV 46.

•••

Pogibosha aki obre; ikh zhe nest' plemeni ni nesled'ka.

'They perished like the Avars.' Neither race nor heir of them remains.[1]

TALE OF BYGONE YEARS, an old Rus' proverb.

•••

Considering the natural environment in which they [*nomads*] *lived, and the related peculiarities of culture, they occupied an extremely important place on the ethnographic map of the European barbaricum.*

LECH LECIEJEWICZ 2000, 175.

⁘

1 Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 56.

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Contents

Russian/Bulgarian/Ukrainian Transliteration IX
List of Maps X
Abbreviations XI

Introduction 1
1 Written Sources 2
2 Archaeological Sources 16
3 The State of Research. Proposed Research Procedure 17

1 Black Sea-Caspian Steppe: Natural Conditions 20
1.1 The Great Steppe. General Comments 21
1.2 Black Sea-Caspian Steppe. Physical Geography 23
1.3 The Landscape of the Black Sea-Caspian Steppe in the Accounts of Travellers and Geographers. From Herodotus to Jan Potocki 28

2 Black Sea-Caspian Steppe: Outline of Ethnic and Political Relations to the End of the Ninth Century 47
2.1 Era of the Dominance of Iranian Nomads 47
2.2 Gothic Episode 59
2.3 Period of Dominance of Turkic Nomads 66

3 The Earliest History of the Pechenegs 85
3.1 The Problem of Ethnogenesis 85
3.2 Pechenegs on the Transvolgan Steppe 94
3.3 The Pechenegs' Wars with Magyars. Migration to the Black Sea Steppe 104

4 Structures and Forms of Existence 127
4.1 Introduction 127
4.2 Political and Social Organization 132
4.3 Economy 160
4.4 Military 184
4.5 The Pechenegs' Ethnic Identity and Value System 207

Aleksander Paroń - 978-90-04-44109-5
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via free access

5 **The Apex of the Pechenegs' Political Importance** 240
5.1 Borders and Internal Territorial Divisions of the Newly-Created Patzinacia 240
5.2 Political Relations between the Pechenegs and Their Neighbours 251
5.3 The History of the Pechenegs before 945. At a Political Crossroads 255
5.4 The Pechenegs as Allies of the Byzantine Empire 277

6 **Decline of the Pechenegs' Power on the Black Sea Steppe** 293
6.1 The Rus', Pechenegs and Uzes (972–1036) 293
6.2 The Byzantine Empire and the Pechenegs on the Eve of Their Migration to the Balkans 317
6.3 Pecheneg Migration to the Balkans 321

7 **The Pechenegs on the Territories of the States Neighbouring the Steppe** 331
7.1 The Pechenegs in Byzantium: 1047–1091 332
7.2 The Pechenegs in the Arpadian Kingdom 372
7.3 The Pechenegs in Rus' 383
7.4 The Pechenegs under Piast Dynasty Rule (?) 387

Conclusion 391

Bibliography 395
Index 445

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Russian/Bulgarian/Ukrainian Transliteration

Vernacular Romanization Upper case letters		Vernacular Romanization Lower case letters	
А	A	а	a
Б	B	б	b
В	V	в	v
Г	G	г	g
Д	D	д	d
Е	E	е	e
Ё	E	ё	e
Ж	Zh	ж	zh
З	Z	з	z
И	I (Rus., Bulg.)/Y (Ukr.)	и	i (Rus., Bulg.)/y (Ukr.)
Й	I	й	i
І	I	і	i
Ї	Ї	ї	ї
К	K	к	k
Л	L	л	l
М	M	м	m
Н	N	н	n
О	O	о	o
П	P	п	p
Р	R	р	r
С	S	с	s
Т	T	т	t
У	U	у	u
Ф	F	ф	f
Х	Kh	х	kh
Ц	Ts	ц	ts
Ч	Ch	ч	ch
Ш	Sh	ш	sh
Щ	Shch (Rus., Ukr.)/Sht (Bulg.)	щ	shch (Rus., Ukr.)/sht (Bulg.)
Ъ (Bulg.)	U	ъ	u
Ы	Y	ы	y
Ь	‘(soft sign)	ь	‘(soft sign)
Э	E	э	e
Ю	Iu	ю	iu
Я	Ia	я	ia

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Maps

1 The Eurasian Steppe 82
2 The Transvolga Region in the 9th century 103
3 The Black Sea steppe in the Pecheneg Period 251
4 The Balkan Peninsula after the Pecheneg Migration 328

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Abbreviations

BGA	Bibliothaeca Geographorum Arabicorum
CET	Central European Texts
CFHB	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CHBE	*The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*. Ed. J. Shepard. Cambridge 2008.
CHEIA	*The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*. Ed. D.Sinor. Cambridge 1990.
DAI-Com.	Dvornik, F., Jenkins, R.J.H., Lewis, B., Moravcsik, Gy., Obolensky, D., Runciman, S. (1962) *De administrando imperio*. Vol. 2: Commentary. London.
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
EI^2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition.1–13. Leiden, London 1960–2004.
EMC	*The Encyclopedia of Medieval Chronicle*. Ed. G. Dunphy et al. Vol. 1–2. Leiden, Boston 2010.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MGH AA	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Autores Antiquissimi
MGH Epist.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistulae
MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)
MGH SS, rer. Germ.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
MGH SS rer. Ger. N.S.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum Nova Series.
MPH SN	Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Series Nova
ODB	*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Ed. in chief A.P. Kazhdan. Vol. 1–3. Oxford 1991.
PSRL	Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei
RE	*Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Vol. 1–24, 1A–10A, SI-S15. Stuttgart 1893–1980.
SRH	*Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*. Vol. 1–2. Ed. I. Szentpétery. Budapest 1937–38.
SSS	*Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich. Encyklopedyczny zarys kultury Słowian od czasów najdawniejszych do schyłku wieku XII*. Eds. W. Kowalenko, G. Labuda, T. Lehr-Spławiński, Z. Stieber. Vol. 1–8. Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 1961–1996.
TIB	*Tabula Imperii Byzantini*. Eds. H. Hunger, J. Koder. Wien 1976–.

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Introduction

At the beginning of his now classic monograph on the Avars, first published in German in 1988, Walter Pohl asked if these people were 'marginal Europeans' (schlechte Europäer).[1] This same question could be posed in relation to every nomadic ethnos that has ever migrated to the European continent. It is also possible to broaden the question and ask whether nomadic peoples, which are migratory by definition, can be considered Europeans at all? This problem is not a new one. Herodotus, who described the Scythians without biases and at times even wrote sympathetically about them, seems to have had his doubts about their Europeanness. The author of *Histories* believed the Scythians belonged to Europe geographically, because this is where they ultimately based themselves. He said their roots, however, were in Asia, over which they once briefly ruled. As enemies of the Persian Empire, they have also been historically placed on the side of Europe. The definitional problems faced by Herodotus remind us of an extremely important fact – namely, that the nomadic groups he describes arriving on the European continent were all essentially products of the so-called Great Steppe, whose landforms and ecosystems defined the basic elements of their cultures. Their nomadic lifestyle and the values associated with it clearly distinguished these nomads from the agricultural communities whose settlements neighboured the plains of the European steppe. This made it easy for nomads to be seen as 'Others' and, ultimately, to be erased from the continent's cultural landscape.

Despite the insights provided by new studies, this tendency continues to appear in contemporary research, and is reinforced by the total absence of nomadic communities in modern-day Europe. The continent's last independent nomadic groups, located in Russia, had ceased to exist by the end of the eighteenth century. Not long afterwards, as a result of Russian economic expansion and the anthropogenic changes this brought, the steppe plains – the natural habitat of nomadic populations – vanished from the European continent. A researcher studying the history and culture of European nomads today must therefore try to recreate a world that not only disappeared long ago, but, above all, is also acknowledged by few in modern-day Europe. One symptom of this situation is that in historical studies of the Old Continent, nomadic communities generally appear only at moments of great drama, or even crisis. We all know of the Huns, whose arrival marked the beginning of the Migration Period, which is still portrayed today as one of the main causes

1 Pohl 1988, 1–4; 2018, 1–5.

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of the fall of the Ancient World. Another nomadic group in public awareness is the Mongols, whose expansion in the mid-thirteenth century significantly altered the political map of Eastern Europe and brought the 'Mongol Terror' (*Timor Tartarorum*) to much of the continent. Both of these events initiated by steppe dwellers were undeniably of great significance to Europe, as they gave shape to a new political and, more broadly, cultural order on the continent. Yet, reducing the presence of nomads in Europe to their roles in these events casts them as inherent enemies of European civilization who appeared suddenly and unexpectedly, like a natural disaster, wreaking death and destruction, only to disappear just as suddenly. Such a perception of these communities, ones which have been present in Europe since the Eneolithic Period (3rd and 4th millennia BCE) is clearly based on misconceptions. It is not easy, of course, to incorporate these migratory steppe peoples into the continent's cultural landscape, because these groups continued to undergo constant change as successive waves of nomadic peoples arrived in Europe from Central Asia. However, ignoring their presence or reducing it to a single dimension – the violence associated with it – limits our understanding of the political and socio-cultural processes taking place in medieval south and eastern Europe.

Nomadic communities were an important part of these processes. In the early Middle Ages (more precisely, the 10th and 11th centuries), Europe's attention was drawn to the Pechenegs, a nomadic people with roots in Inner Asia. Unlike the Huns, Khazars, or Mongols, they were not the founders of great empires, but during the period under discussion they made their mark on the history of the countries and ethnicities neighbouring them. A lack of particularly spectacular political successes should not obscure the fact that the Pechenegs were an extremely interesting ethnic organism that existed for roughly 300 years, if we trace their origins back to Asia. They therefore existed as an independent group longer than many steppe empires, upon which the scholarly community has focused so much attention. I am convinced that a detailed analysis of the Pechenegs' history, the main elements of their culture, and their relationship with the outside world will provide us with a better understanding of the place of nomadic communities in the political and cultural landscape of medieval Europe.

1 Written Sources

There exists a very diverse collection of written sources on the history and culture of the Pechenegs, including a corpus of some 60 texts produced by a number of sometimes quite different cultural traditions. The Pechenegs

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were written about or mentioned by Byzantine, Latin, Muslim, Rus', Syrian, Armenian, Hebrew, and even Tibetan authors.[2] In most cases, these are merely brief mentions that allow us to establish no more than basic facts about these people.

Like the vast majority of nomads, the Pechenegs did not produce their own written sources. We learn about their past through the accounts of foreign authors, many of whom were negatively disposed towards nomads, and few of whom understood the specifics of the culture of the people they were describing. These ethnographic digressions were often written on the basis of descriptive motifs borrowed from previous authors. A related tendency is found in the works of Byzantine writers who used ancient ethnonyms (e.g. Scythians, Cimmerians, Getae, Myrmidons, Mysians, Dacians and others) in place of the ethnic names of present-day 'barbarians'.[3] It should also be noted that extensive ethnographic descriptions are rarely found in these written sources. They are usually limited to reporting key political events, such as wars or alliances with nomads, or to recording information that is useful for diplomatic purposes. Texts from this last category are common among works of Byzantine historiography, the most numerous group of sources available to us. These ancient authors considered war to be the main subject of history.[4] To some extent, the information contained in Byzantine sources on the culture of the Pechenegs is complemented by other authors, most of whom are Muslim, who are less interested in political issues.

In spite of these weaknesses, without this data from works by authors belonging to the Byzantine literary tradition, our knowledge of steppe peoples would be extremely limited. We will thus begin our survey of written sources with materials produced by this group. The author of what is probably the most important of these sources is Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who is considered to have played a major role in the intellectual renaissance that

2 A basic reference guide to Byzantine sources is found in the foundational works of Gyula Moravcsik: 1983 I, 225, 234, 256–257, 270–272, 295, 324–328, 334, 335–340, 340–341, 344–348, 350–352, 354–355, 399–400, 427–429, 430–432, 437–441, 443–444, 445–447, 448, 453–454, 455–456, 467, 500–502, 512–515, 522–528, 537–539, 540–544, 552–553, 556–557; 1983 II, 247–249. Other lists of written sources are found in: Kurat 1937, 266–268; Göckenjan 1972, 207–211; Tryjarski 1975a, 485–492; Golden 1990, 466–470; 1995, 290.

3 Moravcsik 1983 I, 198–199.

4 According to Arnold J. Toynbee, around 4/5 of all ancient Greek historical writing deals with the history of warfare. It should be assumed that in Byzantium this *ratio* was essentially the same. Toynbee 1924, 21. Despite its profound importance, Byzantine historiography has never been characterized by 'ethnographic sensibility'. Cf. Kaldellis 2013, IX, 44–81; Paroń 2011; 2014; 2018.

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took place in the Empire during the rule of the Macedonian Dynasty (867–1056).[5] His political legacy, however, was not worthy of acclaim. Having been crowned as a young child, he had no real influence on the course of events in the state during the first 31 years of his reign. He did not begin to rule autonomously until early in 945, after the deposition of first Romanos I Lekapenos and then his sons, Stephen and Constantine.[6] Constantine VII's long absence from politics provided him with ample free time to pursue his scholarly passions. His activity in this area was two-fold, as he not only promoted and organized scientific work, but also wrote his own scientific treaties.[7]

Among the works that appeared under the name of Constantine VII, of particular importance was one known by its Latin title, *De administrando imperio*,[8] written in 948–952.[9] The work was most likely originally untitled in Greek, but the manuscript begins with the dedication *Πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον υἱὸν Ῥωμανὸν τῶν θεοστεφῆ καὶ πορφυρογέννητον βασιλέα*. This indicates that the work's addressee was Constantine's son Roman, to whom he wished to leave a set of instructions on how to conduct the affairs of the state. The work's structure leads us to assume it was written in two stages and not subjected to particularly careful editing. This is indicated by the repetitions and conflicting dates provided for the same events in different parts of the text.[10]

Constantine VII writes extensively about the Pechenegs, mentioning them in seventeen chapters and providing information about their history, political order, and relations with neighbouring groups. He writes about them in a matter-of-fact manner, though his writing is not devoid of the biases typical of Byzantine elites.[11] He sees the Pechenegs as a potential political partner, a point he returns to repeatedly. The language Porphyrogenitus used in writing this work is free of archaisms, and he deliberately refrains from using a high style in an effort to make his message more clear.[12] However, he does not hesitate to use foreign ethnonyms and toponyms, thanks to which his work has preserved individual words from the Pecheneg's language, albeit in a corrupted form.The learned emperor is also credited with writing a handbook on Byzantine court ceremony. The addressee of the work, whose Latin title was

5 Lemerle 1971, 267–300; Toynbee 1973, 575–605; Hunger 1978, 361; Jurewicz 1984, 168–170; Kazhdan 2006, 134; Rosenqvist 2007, 74–78; Treadgold 2013, 153–165.

6 Ostrogorski 1967, 224–228, 231–232, 237–238; Runciman 1988, 47–62, 65–67, 232–234; Belke, Soustal 1997, 42–45; Kazhdan 2006, 133–134.

7 Krumbacher 1897, 252; Hunger 1978, 361–362.

8 DAI; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989; Belke, Soustal 1997.

9 Bury 1906, 522f.; Hunger 1978, 362; Aleksei Shchavelev suggests a little later datation (after 952 and before 959) of *De administrando imperio* (2019, 686–688).

10 Bury 1906; DAI-Com., 2–5; Hunger 1978, 362–363; Belke, Soustal 1997, 46–59.

11 Cf. Paroń 2005; 2007.

12 DAI I 8–15 (p. 48/49).

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De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae, was again his son Roman, the chosen successor to the throne.[13] We find some extremely interesting and important information about the Pechenegs in the sections where he details the legal and political relations between the imperial court and this nomadic folk.

Constantine VII also commissioned and oversaw the writing of a chronicle that a modern publisher gave the title *Theophanes Continuatus*. In the original version, the work's authors, men gathered around the Emperor, described themselves as *Οἱ μετὰ Θεοφάνην* or 'Those after Theophanes', which indicates that this work was a continuation of the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor. The chronicle's six books contain a description of events that took place between 813 to 963. The work is known from a version that ends in the year 961, with the final section, covering the end of Romanos II's reign, having been lost.[14] This chronicle is valuable in relation to the Pechenegs because it confirms information contained in *De administrando imperio*. Moreover, the relative faithfulness to chronology typical of the chronicle genre helps in dating events.

Valuable information about the relationship between the Pechenegs and Byzantium in the first half of the tenth century is also contained in the chronicle of Simeon the Logothete. All we know about this author is that he was associated with the court in Constantinople during the times of Romanos I Lekapenos and Constantine VII and received the above-mentioned title from the latter. His work has been preserved in two editions. The first (A) was written before 948. Entries from it also appear in the chronicle of Leo Grammaticus. The second edition (B) dates back to the year 963. A close relationship has been demonstrated between it and the chronicle known as the *Chronicle* of George the Monk. In contrast to the followers of Theophanes and John Skylitzes, Symeon writes critically about the Macedonian dynasty, while the chronicler's treatment of Romanos I Lekapenos is a great deal more sympathetic.[15]

A short reference to the Pechenegs can be also found in the writings of Leo the Deacon, an author born in the mid-tenth century, and who described events spanning the years 959–975 in ten volumes. Leo mentions the Pechenegs in a description of the death of the Rus' prince Sviatoslav I Igorevich, where he provides a brief characterization of them.[16]

13 DCB I–II. Cf. Bury 1907, 209–227; Hunger 1978, 364–365; Kazhdan 2006, 135.

14 Th.Cont. Cf. Hunger 1978, 339–343; Kazhdan 2006, 137–152; Rosenqvist 2007, 71–72; Treadgold 2013, 188–196.

15 Sym.Magist.; LeoGram.; Georg.Mon. Cf. Hunger 1978, 354–357; Kazhdan 2006, 162–170; Rosenqvist 2007, 72–73; Treadgold 2013, 203–217.

16 LeoDiac. IX 12 (p. 157); Loretto, Ivanka 1961, 144, 189; Kopylenko, Siuziumov, Ivanov 1988, 82, 214; Talbot, Sullivan 2005, 200; Hunger 1978, 367–371; Kazhdan 2006, 278–294; Rosenqvist 2007, 73–74; Treadgold 2013, 236–246.

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Much more information about the Pechenegs was provided by John Skylitzes, a Byzantine chronicler who wrote in the latter half of the eleventh century. He held both the high court office of curopalate (κουροπαλάτης) and one of the highest-ranking judicial positions in the Empire (δρουνγάριος τῆς βίγλας). This last fact indicates that he was also a lawyer. He wrote a legal treatise at the behest of Alexios I Komnenos in 1092, and probably died in the early twelfth century. His *Synopsis of Histories* (*Σύνοψις ἱστοριῶν*), conceived as a continuation of the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor, covers the years 811–1057 and represents a special case of chronicle writing. While the work retains many features typical of the chronicle genre (especially in terms of its structure), it stands out from standard chronographic writing in its style and insightful criticism of its sources. The chronicle begins with a review of works devoted to the history of the Byzantine Empire, the vast majority of which Skylitzes felt treated their subject matter in a superficial and cursory manner. He then set for himself the ambitious goal of writing a textbook of history that would be error-free,[17] a lofty aim he seems not to have realized.[18] Nevertheless, Skylitzes' chronicle possesses tremendous value, especially as a source on the history of the Pechenegs in the mid-eleventh century. Manuscripts of his work have survived in a version that extends to 1079. Entries from after 1057 have traditionally been considered to be the work of an anonymous author and are collectively known as the *Scylitzes Continuatus*. However, there is growing acceptance today of the idea that this last part of the chronicle may have been written by John Skylitzes as well. It too contains information about the Pechenegs during their turbulent presence in the Byzantine Empire.[19]

Michael Psellos (1018–c.1080), an eminent Byzantine statesman, provides a number of interesting facts in his most well-known work, usually titled by publishers as *Chronographia*.[20] In its content and style it bears little resemblance to most chronicles, nor does it fit the definition of other genres typical of ancient historiography. It is rather more a kind of diary in which special emphasis is placed on descriptions of the achievements of the author and other chosen individuals, especially the Emperors, who Psellos knew personally. He pays little attention to the traditional themes of historiography, such as wars or foreign policy. In spite of this, he does report on the course of an

17 Io.Scyl. Cf. Hunger 1978, 389–393; Rosenqvist 2007, 107; Treadgold 2013, 329–339.

18 Krumbacher 1897, 366.

19 Scyl.Cont.

20 MichPsell.; Cf. Hunger 1978, 372–382; Mango 1980, 245–246; Rosenqvist 2007, 100–105; Treadgold 2013, 271–281, 289–308.

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expedition by Isaac I Komnenos against the Pechenegs during the summer of 1059. In the course of his account, he provides a characterization of these nomads which, in spite of its biases, is nonetheless extremely interesting.

Valuable information on the Pechenegs is also contained in *The History* of Michael Attaleiates (c.1028–1085), an imperial judge close to court circles, who held the offices of both Judge of the Hippodrome and Senator. This work, which describes events from 1034 to 1079/80, is written with a strong emphasis on the achievements of Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–1081), but it also contains much information about the nomads who had been migrating to the Byzantine Balkans since the mid-eleventh century.[21]

Also worthy of note is *Material for a History* (Ὕλη ἱστορίας), whose author, Nikephoros Bryennios (c.1062–1136/7), was an educated soldier who had an excellent family lineage. His father was the duke of Dyrrachion who revolted in 1077 and was proclaimed Emperor by the army of the West. He ultimately lost his struggle for the throne at Constantinople and was subsequently blinded as punishment. The Bryennios family later returned to favour under the rule of Alexios I Komnenos, as evidenced by the marriage between Anna Komnena and the young Nikephoros in 1097. Bryennios's historical work was conceived as a sort of chronicle of the Komnenos family, with a particular emphasis on Alexios. Its title was intended to convey the exceptional modesty of the author and emphasize that his primary aim was to provide source materials for future historians. Bryennios never finished his history, though he managed to complete four books covering the period from 1070 to 1079. He based his work on a number of oral and written sources, ranging from the works of Michael Psellos and Michael Attaleiates, to accounts from those within the Komnenos court, which had a strong oral tradition.[22] For our purposes, Bryennios' accounts of the Pechenegs' invasions of the Balkans and their involvement in conflicts within the Byzantine Empire in 1077 and 1078 are of particular relevance.

The work of Nikephoros Bryennios was continued by his wife, Anna Komnena (1083–c.1155), the oldest child of Emperor Alexios I. After the death of her father (1118), she attempted with the support of her mother, Empress Irene Dukaina, to take the throne. She ultimately lost this struggle to her main rival, her brother John, and was forced to leave the court and take residence in the Convent of Mary Full of Grace in northwestern Constantinople. She devoted her time there mainly to literary activity, and most likely some time

21 Mich.Att. Cf. Hunger 1978, 382–389; Rosenqvist 2007, 106–107; Treadgold 2013, 312–329.

22 Nic.Bryenn. Cf. Hunger 1978, 394–400; Rosenqvist 2007, 127–128; Treadgold 2013, 344–354.

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around 1136 began to write *The Alexiad*, a historical work covering the years 1069–1118.[23]

The Alexiad was based on a solid foundation of written sources. Anna Komnena had access to state documents, was familiar with her father's official correspondence, and had read all the golden bulls and numerous treaties. She was also familiar with the accounts of various eye-witnesses to events. All the historical materials she obtained by these various means were used to achieve a single goal: praising the achievements of Emperor Alexios I. For this reason, *The Alexiad* reads more like an epic poem written in prose than a history written in the same form and spirit as the works of Thucydides or Procopius of Caesarea. It is nevertheless of great value for studying the last period in the history of the Pechenegs, because it is the only source that describes in detail the war of 1087–1091, which immediately preceded their destruction.

Data from eleventh- and twelfth-century authors about the Pechenegs is confirmed and in some cases supplemented by John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories* (Ἐπιτομὴ ἱστοριῶν), which chronicled history from the creation of the world to the death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118. The exact dates of the author's birth and death are unknown. We know that he died as a monk in the mid-twelfth century. He had previously held important court functions, including that of *protoasecretis* (πρωτοασηκρήτις), head of the imperial chancery. Unlike Anna Komnena, he did not write an *encomium* in praise of Alexios I, which thereby allows us to obtain from it a more nuanced picture of Alexios' reign.[24] Information about the Pechenegs is also contained in another twelfth-century world chronicle (Βίβλος χρονική) of Michael Glykas (died c.1200), who like Zonaras was a court official. In his work, Glykas writes extensively about the steppe, though he tends to repeat information from earlier authors.[25]

The last mentions of the Pechenegs come from John Kinnamos (c.1143–c.1200) and Niketas Choniates (1155/57–1217). The first was imperial secretary to Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180) and the author of a book devoted to the history of Byzantium from 1118 to 1176. The main protagonist in this work is Manuel I.[26] Niketas Choniates held a number of high state offices, and at the height of his career, held the position of Grand Logothete and sat in the Senate. His political legacy, however, was less than impressive, and he seems not to have been a particularly influential person. The case is different with

23 An.Kom. Cf. Buckley 2014; Hunger 1978, 400–409; Rosenqvist 2007, 128–131; Treadgold 2013, 354–386.

24 Io.Zon.; Trapp 1986. Cf. Hunger 1978, 416–419; Rosenqvist 2007, 131–132; Treadgold 2013, 388–399.

25 Mich.Glyc. Cf. Hunger 1978, 422–426; Rosenqvist, 2007, 134–135; Treadgold 2013, 403–407.

26 Io.Cinn.; Brand 1976; Treadgold 2013, 407–416.

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his historical writing. He is considered, alongside Anna Komnena, one of the greatest names in Byzantine historiography of the Komnenian era. He mentions the Pechenegs at the beginning of his *Chronological Narrative* (Χρονική διήγησις).[27]

Some very interesting data is also provided to us by Byzantine authors who were not concerned with historiography. A testimonial to the state of mind of the Byzantine elite during their conflict with Simeon I (889–927), ruler of Bulgaria, is found in the epistolary writings of Nicholas Mystikos, Patriarch of Constantinople from 901 to 907 and from 912 to 925.[28] In three letters, he provides interesting details on the significance of the Pechenegs to Bulgarian-Byzantine relations and the perception of nomads by imperial elites.[29] We can also supplement our knowledge on this last topic by reading the statements of the eleventh-century rhetoricians John Mauropous (c.1000–c.1080),[30] Metropolitan of Euchaita, and Theophylact (c.1050–after 1126),[31] archbishop of Ohrid. In a speech usually dated to April 1047, the first of these religious figures referred extensively to events that coincided with the migration of the Pechenegs (winter of 1046/47). Theophylact of Ohrid praises a short-lived peace concluded with the nomads by Alexios I in late 1087. A few, mostly harsh remarks about the Pechenegs are found in Kekaumenos' *Strategikon* (c.1020/24–c.1080).[32] In it the former Byzantine military commander left practical instructions for his sons, including how to wage war against nomadic groups. To illustrate his recommendations, Kekaumenos uses campaigns carried out against the Pechenegs in the mid-eleventh century, that is, shortly after their arrival onto the territory of the Byzantine Empire. Finally, Gregorios Pakourianos, another high-ranking commander active early in the reign of Alexios Komnenos, wrote a *typikon* (a book of rules and rubrics) for a monastery he founded, in which he mentions his victory over the Pechenegs. This event is usually dated to the end of 1083.[33]

A great deal of extremely important information about the Pechenegs comes from sources in the Muslim world. The sphere of interest of these authors differs from that of the Byzantines described above. While the latter focused mainly on political events, Muslim writers devoted more attention to

27 Nic.Chon.; Magoulias 1984. Cf. Hunger 1978, 429–441; Rosenqvist 2007, 140–143; Treadgold 2013, 422–456.

28 Nic.Mist. Cf. Kazhdan 2006, 66–75.

29 Letters no. 9, 23 and 183.

30 Io.Maur. 182 (p. 142–147); Lefort 1976, 265. Cf. Rosenqvist 2007, 98–99.

31 Theoph.Achr. 222–227. Cf. Rosenqvist 2007, 112–113.

32 Cat.Cec. Cf. Rosenqvist 2007, 108–110.

33 Georg.Pak.; Jordan 2000, 507–563.

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issues that today we would describe as geographical and ethnographic. This state of affairs is beneficial for us, because it allows us to see the Pechenegs from a broader perspective. It also provides use with sources that come out of a completely unrelated literary tradition, making it possible to verify the Byzantine historiographic data.

The most important source of information we have on the Pechenegs is the so-called *Anonymous Account of the Countries and Peoples of Inner Asia and Eastern and Central Europe*. Described by Josef Marquart as the oldest known description of these regions of the world, the work exists but in fragmentary form today.[34] The information it contains comes from the latter half of the ninth century,[35] to a work considered to have been lost, *The Book of Routes and Kingdoms*, attributed to Abu Abdallah Jayhānī (al-Jayhānī), a vizier of the Samanid dynasty. The latest research indicates that the first edition of this work dates back to somewhere between 903 and 913. It is assumed, however, that the text was reworked between 922 and 943.[36] Scattered fragments of Jayhānī's work have survived to our times in scientific treatises written by Persian, Turkic, and Arab authors between the tenth and seventeenth centuries.[37]

One of these is *The Book of Precious Gems*, written by Abu Ali Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Rusta. We know little about him except that he was of Persian origin and lived in Isfahan. The work was written no earlier than in 903, but no later than in 913. Only one volume of *The Book* has survived to our times. Apart from information taken from merchants and travellers, the author also made use of the writings of al-Jayhānī. This treatise was to be the basis for the section of Ibn Rusta's book concerning the Magyars, Khazars, Burtas, Volga-Kama Bulgars, and, most importantly, the Pechenegs. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the information from the *Anonymous Account* contained in the above-mentioned work is among the most reliable, the book's author omits a great deal of key information about Turkic peoples, including the Pechenegs.[38] Also belonging to the Jayhānī tradition is an anonymous work of geography written in 982 entitled *Regions of the World* (Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam). Unfortunately, the information it contains poses serious interpretive challenges because the author attempted to update its contents by adding new information to old, often making use

34 Marquart 1903, 24–26.

35 Marquart (1903) dated it to 874–883; Cf. Lewicki 1977, 12. Other proposals for dating *Anonymous Account*: 842–847, 870–892 or 870–895. Cf. Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 34–35; Zimonyi 2016, 32.

36 Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 12–28; Zimonyi 2016, 32.

37 Lewicki 1977, 12; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 35; Zimonyi 2016, 18–26.

38 Lewicki 1977, 7–9; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 33–36; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 34–35; Zimonyi 2016, 18–19, 27.

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of more recent sources in the process. As a result, the information he compiled is often confusing.[39] Almost as valuable as the information provided by Ibn Rusta is that contained in the chronicle of al-Gardīzī, complied between 1050 and 1052. In the ethnographic chapter of his *The Ornament of Histories*, based on the work of al-Jayhānī, we find a whole new set of details omitted by Ibn Rusta concerning Turkic peoples (including the Pechenegs).[40] In 1086, *The Book of Routes and Kingdoms* was completed by Abu Ubayd al-Bakri (al-Bakrī), a native of Andalusia and one of the most famous geographers of the Muslim West. It contained information on the peoples of Eastern Europe, including the Pechenegs, based in part on the Jayhānī tradition, but also on accounts taken from other, later works which have been lost.[41] Finally, a great deal of interesting information, also taken from the work of the Samanid vizier, is provided by Sharaf al-Zamān Tāhir al-Marwazī (Marwazī) in his book *The Natural Properties of Living Beings*, written some time after 1120.[42]

The five sources presented above provide information mainly about the early history of the Pechenegs, i.e., before their migration to the Black Sea steppes. However, accounts exist by Muslim authors from which information about the Pechenegs' later history can be extrapolated. One such work, entitled simply *Kitab* (Book), was written in 922 by Ahmed ibn Fadlan. Some researchers regard him as an Islamicized foreigner, perhaps a Greek. At the turn of 921/922, he was commissioned by al-Muqtadir, the Caliph of Baghdad, to undertake a diplomatic mission to the Volga-Kama Bulgars. His path took him through the Volga region, where he encountered many different Turkic peoples, among them some impoverished Pechenegs. Based on his observations, he produced a thorough description of the customs of the peoples of the steppe, including their lifestyle, beliefs and many other elements of nomadic culture.[43] The value of Ibn Fadlan's account is enhanced by the fact it was based on his personal experiences. Another tenth-century writer was Abu Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Masudi (al-Mas'ūdī) (c.893–956), who was born in Baghdad and died in Egypt. Around 947 he wrote *Meadows of Gold*, which he continued to revise

39 Minorsky 1937; Lewicki 1977, 13–14; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 35; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 49–51; Zimonyi 2016, 19, 267.

40 Lewicki 1977, 14; Martinez 1982; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 36–42; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 52–53; Zimonyi 2016, 19–20.

41 Kunik, Rozen 1878; Lewicki 1977, 14–15 (he dates the work somewhat earlier, to the year 1067/8); Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 43–45; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, Zimonyi 2016, 20–23.

42 Minorsky 1942; Lewicki 1977, 15–16; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 45–46; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 54–65.

43 Ibn Fadlan, 165–169; Togan 1939, VII–XXXIV; Kovalevskii 1956; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 36–39; Frye 2005, 1–21.

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until his death. It is a historical work containing a great deal of information of importance to researchers of the peoples of southern and eastern Europe, including the Pechenegs.[44] The value of al-Masudi's accounts, however, is limited by his tendency to often uncritically relate sensationalized information. Moreover, he is rather inexact in his chronology, at times providing different dates for the same event or simply stating that he cannot remember exactly when an event took place. There is also reason to suspect that al-Masudi sometimes combines several events into one. Ibrahim ibn Yaqub also makes a small but valuable mention of the Pechenegs, dating back to the year 965/6, when the author made a journey through Europe.[45] Information on the culture and language of the Pechenegs is also provided in *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, written by Mahmud al-Kāshgarī, an eleventh-century Islamicized Turk who was an outstanding lexicographer and encyclopaedist.[46] Ali ibn al-Athir (al-Athīr, 1160–1232/3) mentions the Pechenegs several times in his *The Complete History*, a world history that dates back to 1230. The book contains original information on the Pechenegs in the section covering events in the eleventh century.[47] A brief mention of the Pechenegs can be found in an extensive geography compiled during the High Middle Ages by Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (1213–1275 or 1286), a poet, scholar, and traveller born near Grenada.[48] Al-Fida (1273–1331), a Syrian emir from the Ayyubid dynasty, repeats almost exactly the same information. His work, opinions on the value of which vary, is a typical compilation combining older accounts with more recent ones. The credibility of the information about the Pechenegs provided by these last two authors is doubtful.[49]

Latin sources comprise quite a large corpus of texts containing references to the Pechenegs. These are mostly chronicles and *gesta* written by authors belonging to the western, Latin, part of *Christianitas*. In the vast majority of cases, these works contain only snippets. Mentions of the Pechenegs are also found in the *Chronicle* of Regino (d. 915), the abbot of the monastery in Prüm. The work provides an account of events spanning from creation to the year

44 al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*; al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb*; Pellat 1962; Khalidi 1975; Swoboda 1990, 228; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 43–46; Krauss-Sánchez, Waines 2010, 1090.

45 Ibn Yaqub, 38–43; Mishin 1996, 191–199 (Mishin widens this date range somewhat and assumes that Ibn Jakub remained in Europe for several years – namely, between the years 962 and 965); Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 46–49.

46 al-Kāšgarī; Tryjarski 1993, 7–17.

47 Richards 2002.

48 Konovalova 2009, 7–75.

49 Abu-l-Fida; Gibb 1986, 118–119; Konovalova 2009, 76–166.

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906;[50] however, its chronology was largely produced *ex-post*, leading some researchers to question it. Regino dates the arrival of the Pechenegs to the Black Sea steppes to the year 889, which evokes legitimate scepticism.[51] Thietmar (975–1018), Bishop of Merseburg, a well-educated representative of the Saxon aristocracy, began writing a chronicle in the early 11th century. This work provides very valuable information on the history of Central Europe at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries. Thietmar writes about the Pechenegs twice, both times while relating events associated with Bolesław Chrobry's expeditions to Rus' (1013, 1018).[52] An extremely original and valuable account was left to us by St. Bruno from Querfurt, a schoolmate of Thietmar. In 1008, Bruno spent time with the Pechenegs as a missionary. He made a brief account of his pastoral work among the steppe-dwellers in his *Letter to King Henry II*.[53] Another interesting reference work containing valuable information on the perception of nomadic people by those in the Latin world is found in the 17. *scholion* contained in the *Gesta Hamburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, written by the canon Adam of Bremen (c.1052–after 1081).[54] Interesting information about the Pechenegs is also contained in *The Life of Lietbertus, Bishop of Cambrai*, written c.1099/1100, though there are doubts about the credibility of this source.[55] Its author, Raoul (Rodulphus), was a monk in the abbey of the Holy Sepulcher in Cambrai. In 1054 he accompanied Lietbertus on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, during which the bishop and his companions were attacked in the Balkans by 'Scythian robbers' (*latrunculi Sciticae gentis*), who can be identified as Pechenegs. Single mentions of the Pechenegs are also found in the writings of Otto of Freising (c.1114–1158). They are mentioned both in his *Chronicle* and in a work completed by his pupil Rahewin, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*.[56] A short reference to the Pechenegs is also made by Gallus Anonymus in his description of Bolesław Chrobry's second expedition to Rus'.[57]

Among Latin sources, those written by Hungarians comprise a distinct group. Most of these are chronicles and *gesta* written during the High and Late Middle Ages. It is assumed, however, that despite their late date of origin,

50 Regino, 131, 132.
51 Györffy 1975, 284–287.
52 Thietmar, VI 91 (p. 383), VIII 31–33 (pp. 529–532); cf. Holtzmann 1935; Jedlicki 1953, XLIX–LII.
53 Bruno, 98–100.
54 Ad.Brem., scholion 17 (p. 80).
55 V.Liet., XXXIII–XXXIV (pp. 854–855).
56 Ott.Fr., Ott.Fr.-Rah; cf. Matthews, s. 1174–1175.
57 An.Gall., I 7 (p. 23).

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they contain information taken from earlier, lost chronicle monuments.[58] Understandably, in these sources the Pechenegs are mentioned mainly in the context of relations between the steppe peoples and the Arpadian kingdom. Interesting mentions of the history of the Pechenegs in the tenth century are also provided in what is considered the oldest known Hungarian chronicle, the *Gesta Hungarorum*, produced in the first half of the thirteenth century. Its author is anonymous, although he describes himself as 'P who is called magister, and former notary of King Béla'.[59] In the 1280s, Simon of Kéza, chaplain to King Ladislaus IV the Cuman (1272–1290), compiled his own *gesta*. There are doubts however as to the value of the information it contains about the Pechenegs.[60] Very valuable data, in turn, is found in the *Hungarian Fourteenth-century Chronicle Composition*. It was produced, as the name suggests, quite late, but the information it contains was taken from earlier chronicles.[61] Two chronicles were also prepared in the fourteenth century by Heinrich von Mügeln, an influential figure from Meissen, whose activities included not only chronicle writing, but also the composition of poetry, which he wrote in Middle High German. Both of the above chronicles provide information on the history of the Pechenegs in the 11th century, although these are usually things already known from other sources.[62] An abundance of information regarding the Pechenegs is contained in the chronicle of Johannes de Thurocz (János Thuróczy, c.1435–c.1489).[63] The author, however, generally repeats information found in earlier sources, especially the *Chronicle Composition*. Individual mentions of the Pechenegs are also contained in Hungarian works of hagiography, with valuable information being found in both versions of *The Legend of King Saint Stephen*.[64]

It is hard to overestimate the value of the information found in Rus' chronicles for the study of the history and culture of the peoples of the steppe. The earliest information about the Pechenegs is contained in The *Primary Chronicle* (also known as *Tale of Bygone Years*), generally considered the oldest chronicle of ancient Rus'. The original manuscript has not been preserved, but its contents are known from later codices, the oldest of which dates back to the 1370s. The authorship of *The Tale* is usually attributed to Nestor, a monk of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra who is said to have written the initial part of the chronical

58 Spychała 2011, 21–33 (includes an extensive bibliographic reference guide).
59 G.Ung; cf. Veszprémy 2010, 102.
60 Sim.Kéza; cf. Veszprémy 2010a, 1362–1363.
61 Chr.Hung.; cf. Spychała 2010, 348.
62 Chr.Müg.; Chr.Ryth.Müg.; cf. Kottmann 2010, 761.
63 Joh.Thur.; cf. Kopár 2010, 1429–1430.
64 Leg.St.

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compilation between 1113 and 1116. Some scholars, however, assume that the oldest entries in the work were made as early as the 1070s. Nestor probably also had continuators who complemented and revised parts of the work. Entries in the *Primary Chronicle* date back to 1117, with the Pechenegs appearing regularly throughout the book (the last entry dedicated to them is found under the year 1116).[65] The *Hypatian Chronicle* comprises a form of continuation of the *Primary Chronicle*. Its second part, known to researchers as the *Kiev Chronicle*, covers the years 1118–1199. In it, we find information about the late history of the Pechenegs, primarily their presence in Rus' as part of the *Cherni Klobuci* union.[66] Another important source is the *Novgorodian First Chronicle*,[67] whose data sometimes supplements information from the *Primary Chronicle*. It is based on the annual records from Veliki Novgorod (Novgorod the Great) compiled between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Significantly less important for our purposes are statements contained in the *Nikon Chronicle*. It was compiled later (in the sixteenth century) and the credibility of the information it contains has been questioned by contemporary scholars.[68]

Important information about the Pechenegs is also contained in two chronicles written within the milieu of Middle Eastern Christians. The first of these is a work by Matthew of Edessa (Uṛha) (c.1070–c.1137), an Armenian who lived in northern Syria. The chronicle covers the years 952–1129. After the author's death, additional entries up to 1162/63 were added by an otherwise unknown monk named George. Also worthy of note is information provided by Matthew from Edessa regarding the history of the Pechenegs in the eleventh century.[69] Other interesting information is found in a historical work by Michael the Syrian (1126–1199), patriarch of the Jacobite Church. He produced a comprehensive chronicle of the world dating down to 1195, written in the Syriac language. The data of interested to us in this work concerns the late period of the Pechenegs' history.[70]

Their turbulent history also left traces in extant copies of some very exotic ancient writings. Of the greatest relevance is a short mention in a Tibetan manuscript addressed to the ruler of the Uyghurs. This text is a kind of report whose five authors provide information about the peoples and kingdoms of the north. They briefly mention the *Be-ča-nag* people, who are in conflict with the 'Hor state', meaning the Uyghurs. This information, dated to the latter half

65 PVL.; cf. Sielicki 1968; Gippius 2010a, 1228–1229; Wójcicka 2010, 108–131.
66 Ip.Let.; cf. Wójcicka 2010, 131.
67 NPL.; cf. Guimon 2010, 1158–1159.
68 PNL; cf. Gippius 2010, 1150; Melnyk 2013, 151–158.
69 Mat.Ed.; cf. Dostourian 1993; Andrews 2010, 1091; 2017, 1–45.
70 Mich.Syr.; cf. Weltecke 2010, 1110–1111.

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of the eighth century, is the oldest known reference to the Pechenegs.[71] Quite laconic, but valuable information on them is also contained in Khazar documents written in Hebrew. These were discovered at the end of the nineteenth century in the *Genizah* of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo. We have Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak to thank for the detailed analyses they carried out on these texts.[72]

2 Archaeological Sources

Archaeological sources are of particular importance for learning more about the material culture of nomads. They provide data on a mass scale, which theoretically allows for more a precise picture of the processes that took place within a given steppe community, e.g. the cultural and social changes affecting it and its migration patterns. Several key factors, however, provide cause for researchers to dampen their enthusiasm. First, what we know about the vast majority of Eurasian nomadic cultures comes from analyses of burial sites. The specific nature of such material compels scholars to ask themselves how it reflects on the nomads' cultural universe as a whole and the changes that took place within it. It is known that some elements of a funeral ritual typical for a given community could persist even after it had adopted a semi-settled or settled lifestyle.[73] In recent decades there has been a significant increase in the amount of archaeological material attributed to the Pechenegs. In the area of the Black Sea-Caspian steppes, from the Emba River to the lower Danube, several hundred locations have been discovered containing nomadic burial sites that are believed to belong to the Pechenegs.[74] It is impossible to provide an exact number not only because of the dispersed nature of the research (conducted by researchers from several countries, ranging from Kazakhstan to the

71 Bacot 1956, 137–153; Clauson 1957, 11–24; Senga 1992, 504.

72 Golb, Pritsak 1982; 1997.

73 Cf. I. Melyukova's comments on changes in the burial traditions of the Scythians: Melyukova 1990, 109–110.

74 A large part of these are so-called 'secondary' graves, dug into the embankments of earlier burial mounds (kurgans). Occasionally, several such graves are discovered on one site. Cf. Garustovich, Ivanov, 2001, 128–131 (maps), 162–209 (other previously unpublished archaeological finds are also discussed here). Other archaeological studies in which information can be found on the Pechenegs include: Bálint 1989, 71–73, 142–144; Fedorov-Davydov 1966, 134–144; Diaconu 1970; Dobroliubskii 1986, 47–61; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 9–38; Pletneva 1958, 153–226; 1973; 1981, 213–223; 1982, 23–26, 61–64, 134–135; 1988, 35–46; 1990; Spinei 1986, 84–91, 100–104; Bisembaev 2003, 73–120; Kruglov 2003, 13–82; Postică 2007, Atavin 2008, 71–107; Ioniţă 2010, 115–134; 2013, 115–150.

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Republic of Moldova and Romania), but also due to serious challenges faced by researchers trying to accurately date a given find and determine its ethnic origin. In this archaeological material, it is particularly difficult to distinguish those items belonging to the Pechenegs from those close belonging to the culturally similar Oghuz (Uz) people.[75] Another problematic phenomenon is the archaeological invisibility of the Pechenegs in the Balkans. There is no doubt that a very large group of Pechenegs, most likely the core of the ethnos, moved into this region in the mid-11th century. Yet there are only faint archaeological traces of the former presence of these steppe dwellers in today's Dobrudja and north-eastern Bulgaria.[76]

Despite these reservations, it is impossible to recreate a picture of the Pechenegs' culture and to define their place on the cultural and political landscape of Europe without taking into account archaeology.

3 The State of Research. Proposed Research Procedure

Both a great deal and very little has been written about the Pechenegs. This paradox is due in part to the nature of steppe dwellers themselves. An ethnos which in its history travelled from today's eastern Kazakhstan, through the Volga region and the Black Sea steppes to the Balkans and Pannonia by necessity must have come into contact with many communities and written itself into their histories. This means that the author of every major study devoted to the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe in the tenth and eleventh centuries had to mention the Pechenegs. Every study dealing with the Khazar Khaganate Byzantium, Rus', Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and even Poland in the above-mentioned period had to contain more or less extensive mentions of them. A similar state of affairs makes it nearly impossible to carry out a detailed overview of studies made on the Pechenegs by modern and ancient scholars. Such an endeavour would require writing a thick monograph dedicated solely to this topic. Such an enterprise would be pointless, as well, since

75 Some researchers do not even attempt to define this precisely. See Dobroliubskii 1986. The author is willing to state that the nomadic archaeological finds discovered in the western part of the Black Sea steppes and dated to the end of the ninth to the twelfth centuries are Pecheneg-Uz, although both peoples had been separate ethnic and political groupings for most of their history. The same applies to: Bisembaev 2003; Atavin 2008.

76 Until recently, archaeological evidence for the presence of the Pechenegs south of the Danube was a cemetery attributed to them in Odărci. Dončeva-Petkova 2005; 2007, 643–660. Today, however, the connections between this necropolis and the Pecheneg people are questioned. Cf. Curta 2013, 143–202; Fiedler 2013, 249–285.

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in the vast majority of such studies, the Pechenegs feature as a subject of minor importance in comparison to the primary topic of discussion. Far fewer works deal with them extensively. If we put aside a few short encyclopaedias and few book chapters, we can say that in modern-day research, just three (sic!) studies have been written in which the authors attempted to present a comprehensive profile of the Pechenegs' history and culture.

Nearly 80 years ago, a monograph titled *History of the Pechenegs* was published by the Turkish scholar Akdes Nimet Kurat.[77] The contents of the study corresponded to the title. In ten chapters, the scholar described the history of the Pechenegs, starting from their presence in the Volga region to their defeat in the Battle of Lebounion, which ended their existence as an independent people. The researcher made use of almost no archaeological materials, basing his considerations mainly on written sources. For understandable reasons, Kurat's study is no longer of much relevance to scholars. Moreover, having been written in Turkish, it was never readily available to a wider public.

Forty years later, a monograph devoted to the Pechenegs was published by Professor Edward Tryjarski, a long-time employee of the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences).[78] Although this eminent Polish Turkologist did not completely ignore the history of the steppe dwellers, his primary focus was on presenting particular aspects of their culture. He did so against the broad comparative canvas of the cultures of other Turkic Eurasian peoples. He also devoted a separate chapter to the relations between the Pechenegs and Poland. Though written in a language not commonly used in academia, Edward Tryjarski's study remains a basic reference work widely cited in studies devoted to nomadic peoples.

In the last years of the twentieth century, Victor Spinei wrote an extensive chapter on the Pechenegs that was included in a book devoted to the migration of nomadic peoples in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.[79] The eminent Romanian historian and archaeologist used a method of presentation similar to Tryjarski's, with the main difference being that he described elements of both the culture and history of the Pechenegs to an equal degree.

In addition to the work of the three researchers mentioned above, there are quite a few studies by historians, archaeologists, and oriental philologists that

77 Kurat 1937.
78 Tryjarski 1975a, 479–625.
79 Spinei 1999, 88–151; 2003, 93–159.

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have focused on a selected part of the history of the Pechenegs or a specific aspect of their culture.[80]

Of all the research methods presented above, I consider those used by Edward Tryjarski and Victor Spinei to be the closest to my own. Like both of these scholars, I intend to make a full characterization of the history of the Pechenegs, while at the same time reproducing an image of their culture, and especially those elements that most strongly determined the relationship of these nomads with the outside world. The nomadic lifestyle and the cultural patterns that grew out of it, on one hand, shaped the perception of steppe dwellers by their settled neighbours, while, on the other, they also defined the true needs and behaviours of nomads in their dealings with outsiders. It is within the very specific cultural universe of steppe dwellers, one that arose out of a need to adapt to very specific natural conditions, that one finds the guiding forces which shaped their attitudes towards neighbouring communities.

This book consists of three parts. Chapters one to three are introductory. They show the natural conditions in which nomads lived, the history of the Black Sea and Caspian steppes before the arrival of the Pechenegs, and the earliest history of this ethnos. The second part is an extensive chapter four, devoted to the main elements of steppe culture. This break in my historical discourse to reflect upon the structures and forms of Pecheneg life is justified by the previously mentioned fact that these structures to a large extent determined the relations between these nomads and the outside world. The third part, which also includes three chapters, contains reflections on the political history of the Pechenegs and their place in the political balance of power that prevailed in Eastern Europe. The material in chapter seven describes the Pechenegs' situation after they started living on the territories of the states neighbouring the steppe. It shows how the survival strategies adopted by particular nomadic groups differed in fundamental ways, although these strategies generally led them towards acculturation and ultimately resulted in the disappearance of their former nomadic values and means of existence.

80 Early history of the Pechenegs: Senga 1992, 503–516; Romashov 1999, 21–35; Zimonyi 2013, 99–113. Pechenegs and Byzantines: Vasil'evskii 1908, 1–175; Malamut 1995, 105–147; Kniaz'kii 2003; Dudek 2007a, 83–124; Meško 2012; 2013, 179–205. Pechenegs on the lower Danube: Diaconu 1970; 1975, 235–240; Mănucu-Adameştanu 2001, 87–112. Pechenegs and Bulgaria: Bozhilov 1973, 37–62; Dimitrov 2011, 195–247. Pechenegs in Hungary: Györffy 1990, 94–191; Göckenjan 1972, 89–114; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 7–38. Pechenegs and Rus': Golubovskii 1884; Rasovskii 1933, 1–66; Mavrodina 1983; Tolochko 1999, 53–79; Morgunov 2010, 62–75. On the language of the Pechenegs: Németh 1921–25, 219–225; 1930, 27–34; 1932; 1971, 1–51; Menges 1944–45, 256–280; Shcherbak 1959, 362–389; Vörös 2002, 617–631.

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CHAPTER 1

Black Sea-Caspian Steppe: Natural Conditions

I shall begin with a description of the natural conditions of the Black Sea-Caspian steppe for reasons other than merely fulfilling expectations about what a typical academic monograph should contain. Geographical factors have been determinants in the development of all human societies – both those in the past and those of today – and steppe-dwellers are certainly no exception. This does not mean, however, that I promote the notion of geographical determinism or assume that the history of a particular community is *a priori* determined by the natural conditions of the area(s) where it resides.

Yet in this respect the case of nomads of the steppes of Northern Eurasia is a special one. Their existence was closely linked to a unique geographical environment, and it was changes to this environment caused by anthropogenic factors that resulted in the disappearance of nomadic communities in Europe in the early 19th century. From at least the beginning of the first millennium BCE, up until the late eighteenth century, when the western extremes of the Great Steppe came under the political domination of the Russian Empire, this region was the shared home of often quite diverse nomadic communities. Today, the term 'steppe' applies to the lands north of the Black and Caspian Seas more in historical terms than in relation to their physical geography. This region's steppe and forest steppe zones have been subjected to the most far-reaching anthropogenic change of all the biomes in Northern Eurasia. It is estimated that more than 60 percent of the steppe area in Europe has been converted into arable land. The natural forests in the forest-steppe zone have been almost completely eliminated. With the exception of small areas that have been turned into nature reserves (e.g., the Askania-Nova biosphere reserve in Ukraine), the biogeography of the European steppe and forest steppe zones is therefore more cultural than natural in character. The Asian part of the zone has been less affected by anthropogenic change. However, here too, mainly in western Kazakhstan and southern Siberia, there were intensive efforts in the 1950s to develop 'virgin lands' into cultivated fields, which fundamentally changed the region's natural landscape.[1]

It is therefore necessary to provide here a general characterization of the natural environment typical of nomads and how it determines the culture specific to these communities and the lifestyle associated with it. It is also

1 Chibilyov 2002, 248, 258–60; Makohonienko 2011, 24.

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necessary to recall descriptions of the Black Sea-Caspian steppe written over 23 centuries (from the 5th century BCE to the late 18th century CE). These authors immortalized the landscape of steppelands that today no longer exist.

1.1 The Great Steppe. General Comments

A vast steppe once stretched across the interior of the Eurasian continent, from the northern shores of the Black Sea to Manchuria. Its northern boundary was a humid forest steppe zone that separated it from a long, continuous belt of deciduous and mixed forests farther north. The steppe ran from the Hungarian Plain in the west through the northern regions of today's Ukraine and Kazakhstan to the southern ends of the Western Siberian Highlands and Mongolia.[2] To the south, it was bordered by a belt of semi-arid steppe with short, dry grass or semi-desert features. In the west, this semi-arid belt extended from the Caspian Plain and to the plains of Xinjiang and Gansu, reaching southern and north-western Mongolia. Both transitional belts combine the natural conditions of the zones they separate.[3] The steppe zone, despite the fact that it stretches over such a large area, is characterized by its relative homogeneity. It has a continental climate with cold winters and quite long and hot summers. The average January temperature varies between -12° and -23°C.[4] The eastern part of the steppe is markedly colder. In the coldest parts of Mongolia, the average temperature in January, as measured in Ulan Bator, is -27°C. From October to March the average temperatures are always negative.[5] In July, the average temperature of the steppe zone remains in a range from 19 to 24°C. It should be noted, however, that summer is much longer in the European part of the zone.[6]

Average precipitation in the steppe ranges from 250 to 500 mm, which, due to a relatively high degree of evaporation, results in a humidity deficit. However, major rivers largely satisfy the ecosystem's need for water, especially in the western part of the steppe.[7]

2 Taaffe 1990, 33; Chibilyov 2002, 248.
3 Taaffe 1990, 34; Cf. Chibilyov 2002, 248–9.
4 Taaffe 1990, 35; Chibilyov 2002, 248–9.
5 Taaffe 1990, 35.
6 Taaffe 1990, 35.
7 Taaffe 1990, 35; Makohonienko 2011, 24, 26–27. In the western part precipitation is more abundant and the growing season is longer (about 190 days, compared to 160–175 days in the east).

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The predominant soil types are black and chestnut soils, on which under natural conditions various types of grasses usually grow, in particular, 'ostrich grasses' (*Stipa*). These are an excellent source of feed for animals.[8] However, the steppe is not completely devoid of trees. In fact, although they are quite rare in the watershed, in areas with higher humidity (river valleys, topographical depressions, ravines) a number of species can be found, including oak, linden, maple, ash, elm, poplar, alder, fir, and birch. The composition of forests changes as you move from west to east. Oaks are typical for the European steppe, while east of the Urals, birch, poplar, aspen, and fir dominate. A typical feature of steppe flora is the presence of shrubs, including dwarf cherry (*Prunus fruticosa*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), almond trees, Siberian peashrub (*Caragana arborescens*), *Spiraea*, and wild roses.[9]

Most species of steppe fauna are distributed over a number of different zones, and thus, there are far fewer species endemic to the steppe than to forest and desert areas. This is due to the wide variety of steppe habitats, which range from marshes to semi-deserts and from forests to sandy and rocky steppe. The animal population of the steppe is also highly varied, both in terms of the number of species and the natural variation among individuals within a given species. Ungulates and rodents dominate among vertebrates. The steppe was once home to herds of ungulates capable of travelling across large areas in search of food (e.g., the Saiga antelope, a species typical of the southern Urals and Kazakh steppes). Wild horses and kulans (a species of asiatic wild ass) also lived in large herds, usually numbering 50–100 individuals. As a result of human activity, most ungulates had disappeared from the steppe by the beginning of the 19th century. Today rodents are dominant among steppe mammals, most of which live underground in colonies, allowing them to move about easily over a fairly large area.[10]

The Great Steppe is characterized by a relative lack of contours in its terrain relief. The mountain ranges occurring here mostly run parallel to one another (Altai, Tien-Shan).[11] An exception are the Urals, whose northern ranges, which extend beyond the steppe, are both very high and relatively inaccessible.[12] The area of greatest interest to us is a vast, expansive plain with by a relatively monotonous landscape.[13] This lack of surface features facilitated both the

8 Taaffe 1990, 36; Zamotaev 2002, 114–117; Chibilyov 2002, 248, 249–251; Makohonienko 2011, 28–31.

9 Chibilyov 2002, 256–7; Makohonienko 2011, 24.

10 Chibilyov 2002, 257–258.

11 Shahgedanova, Mikhailov, Larin, Bredikhin 2002, 314–319; Merzlyakovan 2002, 377–381.

12 Shahgedanova, Perov, Mudrov 2002, 287–290.

13 Taaffe 2002, 37.

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migration of nomads and the creation of huge steppe empires, which sometimes spanned the entire European continent.

1.2 Black Sea-Caspian Steppe. Physical Geography

Of particular importance for our considerations are the western regions of the Great Steppe, stretching from the Volga region to the lower Danube and along the arching belt of the Carpathian Mountains. This is where the best documented and most important events in the history of the Pechenegs took place.

At the easternmost extreme of this geographical area is the Volga region, which straddles both sides of the Volga River. In terms of its natural conditions, the region can be divided into three distinct zones: forests, forest-steppe, and steppe. The first of these zones stretches to the Kama estuary on the left bank of the Volga (the Transvolga), and on the right bank includes the areas between two of the Volga's tributaries: the Sura and the Sviiaga. In terms of topography, it is a flat lowland dominated by alluvial and sandy soils, though marshes and peat bogs are also common. Bordered to the north by the Northern Ridge (Northern Uvaly) and extending southward is the marl and limestone Viatka Upland, which is a drainage basins for this right-bank tributary of the Kama. The Volga Valley, lying south of where Nizhny Novgorod is located today, contains the forest-steppe zones of the Volga region. On the right bank of the Volga the Volga Upland extends southwards across the forest steppe, dropping steeply towards the Volga and forming cliffs along its bank. The Volga Upland has a more humid climate and contains a wide variety of soils. It is dominated by deciduous forests. The left bank of the Volga is low and flat like the river's northern section. On the lowlands of this side of the river, forests are found only in the north. The climate here is much drier, and the area is predominantly steppe. South of the Penza-Kuibyshev line lies the Volga Steppe, which becomes a semi-arid plain as it gently descends towards the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Plain is an undifferentiated flat plain covered with a layer of marine sediments. The Volga, which is the axis of the geographical region below the Kama estuary (near today's Kazan), reaches a width of 2–4 km. However, during spring floods it sometimes spills over onto an area extending out 20–40 km. The Akhtuba, a branch of the Volga that splits from it near Volgograd, 500 km from its mouth, follows a separate course into the Caspian Sea. The Volga Delta is among the world's richest areas in terms of fish stocks.

The climate of the Volga region is distinctly continental. Tens and even hundreds of square kilometres of the Caspian Sea are ice-covered in winter. In the southern part of the region, winters last three months and summers are

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generally hot. Precipitation decreases as one moves south (from 500 mm to 150 mm in Astrakhan). Rainfall is most abundant in summer, while in winter in the extreme south there is sometimes a complete lack of snow cover. So-called 'dry winds' (sukhovei) and 'dry fogs' are both common, with the latter occurring most often in July.

Both of these atmospheric phenomena have a lethal effect on vegetation, which varies significantly throughout the Volga region. The northern area reaches into the taiga zone, which is covered in coniferous forests dominated by spruce. More to the south, the taiga transitions to mixed forests (spruce, oak). In the central Volga region's forest-steppe zone, deciduous forests (oak mixed with linden) occur alternately with steppe vegetation. In the lower part of the region, various types of forest are found, depending on the soil. Where black soils dominate, feather grass (*Stipa*) grows, chestnut soils cover the 'wormwood steppe', and finally, the southernmost areas with their loamy-sandy soils are classified as solonchak steppe. Vegetation is sparse, and both salt lakes and loose sands can be found here. From the latter, blowing winds form crescent-faced barkhan dunes. In the Caspian Lowland, semi-arid areas begin to appear.[14]

To the west of the Volga region, along the central course of the Don on the river's right bank is a plateau called the Donets Upland. Its north-western extreme borders the Central Russian Upland, while in the southeast it reaches the area where the Don Valley nears the Volga. The plateau is made up of limestone and sandstone, and is crossed by deep river valleys and *balkas* (arroyos), and by wide, gently sloping valleys, which were most likely once river channels. At higher elevations in the steppe of the Donets Upland both individual and clusters of kurgans are found.[15] South of the lower reaches of the Don, starting from where the river makes a sharp turn to the south-west, the Zadonets Steppe begins. The course of the rivers in this lowland area is rather slow, and its valleys sometimes contain brackish lakes. Almost all of these rivers feed into the Don River system, in which the water levels are generally low outside of the spring season. The Don flows into the Sea of Azov through a delta that extends out as the water nears Taganrog Bay. The lower reaches of the Don, like the bay itself, abound in fish.[16] The Zadonets Steppe is dominated by black earth and chestnut soils, and frequently occurring solonchak steppe, which makes this region in terms of its natural conditions, a transition area to the Caspian Lowland, which neighbours it to the east. The climate has continental

14 Czefranow 1953, 158–165.

15 Cf. below the accounts of William of Rubruck and Jan Potocki.

16 Cf. below the observations of Strabon and Rubruck.

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characteristics: average annual precipitation in the western part of the steppe is 400 mm, while in the eastern part it is 300 mm. Rainfall occurs mainly in the summer in the form of violent torrential rains. In the spring and summer, the Zadonets Steppe is subject to dry wind (sukhovei) from the west, and in the winter it is prone to blizzards and snow storms. The vegetation is dominated by steppe grasses, while forested areas occur very rarely, mainly in river valleys.[17]

The North Caucasus is a geographical region located south of the Zadonets Steppe and the Caspian Lowland. Its central part consists of an upland area (Stavropolskaia Upland) that divides the region into a western half, with natural conditions similar to the Black Sea steppe, and an eastern half, resembling the steppes and deserts near the Caspian Sea. The North Caucasus abounds in rivers, the largest of which, the Kuban River, drains into the Black Sea; the smaller Terek River originates in the Caucasus Mountains and flows into the Caspian Sea drainage basin. In the lower reaches of the river, there is a dense network of lakes. The climate here is continental, with short but harsh winters (from -20 to -25°C), and spring arriving in late February, quickly followed by a hot summer. Precipitation increases from east to west and from north to south as we approach the Caucasus Mountains. Most of the North Caucasus is steppe. Trees (mainly deciduous) and shrubs grow only in river valleys. The western area, where black earth dominates, is largely feather-grass steppe, while the east contains salt and wormwood steppe, though loose sands are also commonly found. In this part of the North Caucasus one also finds bitter-salt lakes.[18]

The central part of today's Ukraine is occupied by the Black Sea Plate (Ukrainian Plate), stretching from the northwest to the southeast. At its western extreme it reaches a height of 470 m above sea level. It gradually falls as one moves eastward, reaching its lowest point in the Lower Dnieper region, where it splits into the Ukrainian Plate (proper) in the west, and the Azov Massif in the east. In the north, the plate falls steeply towards the Polesie Lowland, while in the east it is bordered by the Donets Upland. The western part is comprised of crystalline rock (granite) covered on watersheds with younger sediments. In some places the rivers cut into the hard ground, forming canyon-like ravines, while in others, they course through crystalline rocks (the Boh,[19] Dnieper),

17 Czefranow 1953, 137–138.

18 Czefranow 1953, 141–143.

19 This river is also called 'Southern Bug' or 'Southern Buh'. I will use the name 'Boh' to distinguish it from the Western Bug, a tributary of Narew River. The latter one is called 'Bug' in this study.

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creating foaming rapids (*porohi*) that break the water's smooth surface.[20] The landscape here is interspersed with numerous ravines. The eastern part of the Black Sea Plate gently transitions into the Dnieper Lowland, which is an unvariegated, flat plain covered with loess and dotted with shallow depressions that hold water for long periods in the spring. The river valleys here have uneven slopes, with one rising steeply and the other ascending gently towards the watershed. The course of the rivers is relatively slow and calm. In spring, due to the rapid melting of snow, they spill over onto large areas, only to have the riverbed narrow again significantly in the summer. In the south, the Black Sea Plate gradually slopes towards the Black Sea Lowland, which stretches along the northern coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and is crossed by numerous river valleys and dry *balkas*. The seacoast, toward which the lowland gradually falls, is often steep, worn down and broken up by wave action. The Black Sea Lowland is supplied with water mainly by the Dnieper, Boh and Dniester Rivers. Their estuaries take the form of a liman, separated from the open sea by sand bars.

The climate in the region is continental, as in the neighbouring regions described above. However, the level of variation is much less distinct. The areas to the east of the Dnieper are cooler, although thaws occur here during the winter. Summer, especially in the south, is hot, while autumn is dry with long periods of beautiful weather. In the west, spring arrives earlier and is longer and warmer. In the south, the steppelands often suffer periods of drought. The lack of mountain barriers to protect against the influx of cold arctic air makes the winters throughout the region very cold.[21] On the north-western coast of the Black Sea, in the environs of Odessa, the temperature drops to –30°C. The cold makes the sea freeze, even as far as a few kilometres out from the shore. The same is true of the lower reaches of the rivers flowing into it.[22]

In terms of vegetation, Eastern Europe includes three zones: forest, forest-steppe and steppe. The first of these zones extends south to a line formed by the cities Rivne – Zhitomyr – Kiev – Konotop – Briansk – Tula.[23] Deciduous trees dominate here, including oak, maple, ash, and linden, as well as hornbeam in the west. The area's wetlands are predominantly reed marshes dotted with numerous clumps of shrubby vegetation. To the south is the forest-steppe zone, with its border formed by the line running through Chișinău –

20 Hess, Rychławski 1967, 81. Cf. below the accounts of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Erich Lassota von Steblau and Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan.

21 Cf. below the accounts of Herodotus, Pseudo-Hippocates and Beauplan.

22 Cf. the accounts of Herodotus, Strabon and Giovanni da Pian del Carpine.

23 Szymański 1973, 25.

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Pervomaisk – Poltava – Chuhuiv – Pavlovsk.[24] Deciduous forests grow here mainly on the high banks of the rivers, while the watersheds are dominated by steppe vegetation, mainly feather-grass steppe, typical of the local black earths. Characteristic of this area are river valleys known as *levady*, densely populated with alder, willow, sallow, and poplar. They are surrounded by lowlands and riverbanks that overflow in the spring, as well as oxbow lakes with backwaters and lakes scattered among them. In the southernmost belt, feather-grass steppe dominates.[25]

Crimea is connected to the continent through the Isthmus of Perekop. Its eastern end, the Kerch Peninsula, and the Taman Peninsula across from it divide the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, which are linked by the Strait of Kerch. Almost the entire northern and north-eastern coast of the Crimea, as well as the continental coast across from it, are dotted with a complex network of shallow bays, low-lying spits, limans and straits. The area is known as the Sivash (Rotten Sea). It is separated from the Sea of Azov by a sandy spit which is joined to the continent in the north. The steppe occupies 75% of the peninsula, and in terms of natural conditions resembles the Black Sea Lowland. The Crimean steppe is generally level, rising slightly toward the south, and is almost completely devoid of water. In the summer, the mountain-fed Salhir, the largest river on the peninsula, does not even reach the Sivash, where it has its mouth in other seasons. The water deficit is lessened in part by ponds formed from melting snow. To the south of the steppe, a small strip of land 130 km long and 50 km wide is occupied by a line of mountains, extending to the southwest and the northeast. The limestone slopes of the Crimean Mountains fall gently to the north and rise steeply to the south. The ridge of the main range comprises a curving, grassy area, whose width varies from several dozen meters to 7 km. The provide summer pasture grounds known as *yayla*, which can also refer to the entire mountain range. The Crimea Mountains do not reach even 1500 m at their highest point. The mountain slopes are covered with dense forests, with beech trees predominating on the northern slopes, mixed forests dominating on the southern slopes (mainly oak and dogwood (*Cornus*) in the understorey), and pine forests at higher elevations. The flora growing on the *yayla* are a combination of steppe species (ostrich grasses) and high mountain vegetation (Crimean Edelweiss). The individual ranges are broken up by lowlands, which makes it easier to cross the mountains to reach the coast. On the southern coast of the Crimea, a narrow strip of land (2–8 km) separates the mountains from the sea. In terms of climate and

24 Szymański 1973, 25.

25 Szymański 1973, 26; Hess, Rychławski 1967, 81–82.

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vegetation, it differs significantly from the rest of the peninsula, bearing a closer resemblance to Mediterranean regions. Winters in the south of Crimea are mild and rainy, with the temperature in January averaging 4°C. Some snowfall occurs, but it melts quickly. Summers are hot and dry.[26]

West of the Black Sea Plate is a fairly high elevated plateau, extending from the Dniester to the Prut in the west. This is the Moldavian Plateau (Pokutian-Bessarabian Upland), which slopes downward to the north and south. In the north it becomes a hilly, treeless lowland with black earth, forming an extension of the Black Sea Plate. In southern Bessarabia it turns to steppe. The climate of this geographical region is relatively mild, with only the southern regions showing continental influences. In the highlands, the average temperature in January varies from –2 to 4°C, while in July it ranges from 20 to 22°C. In the spring, the area is plagued by cold northern winds that bring late frosts. The vegetation of Bessarabia consists mainly of oak and hornbeam forests, though steppe flora is found in its southern parts.[27]

In general, the natural conditions of the areas along the lower Danube (especially Dobrudja) display a great deal of similarities with those of the steppe zone. These include a continental climate, and a topography and vegetation typical of the steppe.

1.3 The Landscape of the Black Sea-Caspian Steppe in the Accounts of Travellers and Geographers. From Herodotus to Jan Potocki

The earliest fully preserved description of the Black Sea steppe dates back to the middle of the 5th century BCE. Its author is Herodotus from Halicarnassus. His description is part of an extensive ethnographic excursus devoted to the Scythians, who inhabited the region in question at the time. The author provides a relatively precise description of the boundaries of their lands, indicating which of the peoples north of the Black Sea should be regarded as Scythians. The Scythia of Herodotus was square in shape. Its western side was the lower Danube, which, according to the Greek historian, flowed in its final section not from west to east, but from north to south, ending in an estuary in the Euxine Sea (Black Sea). Its shoreline formed its southern boundary, while 'the Maeotis', i.e. the Sea of Azov, and the 'Tanais' (Don) flowing into it demarked its eastern side. Its northern border was delineated by a swath of lands stretching from west to east inhabited a number of independent ethne, including

26 Czefranow 1953, 129–134. Cf. also the observations of William of Rubruck.

27 Czefranow 1953, 126–127; Hess, Rychławski 1967, 85.

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the Agathyrsi, Neuri, Androphagi, and Melanchlæni. The Crimea (Tauris), of which Herodotus knew relatively little, was inhabited by the Tauri. Finally, beyond the Don lived the Sarmatians (Sauromatæ).[28] The last two ethne were treated as groups distinct from the Scythians. Herodotus also gives the dimensions of this Scythian square. Travelling from Istros (Ister, today Lower Danube) to the Borysthenes River (Dnieper) required a 10-day journey, and going from the Borysthenes to the Maeotis also took 10 days, while travelling from Lake Maeotis to the settlements of the Melanchlaeni required 20 days. Herodotus estimated a one-day journey to be the equivalent of 200 stades (*stadia*), which yields an overall distance of 4000 stades.[29] It is very difficult to convert these measures of length into those used today because the author never mentions what type of stade he had in mind.[30] However, we do not need such calculations to state that the boundaries and scale of Scythia proposed here were highly schematic. According to modern-day research, only the size of the southern border of Scythia, which runs along the coast of Pontos, is comparable to the actual size of the Scythians' lands.[31] It should also be noted that Herodotus unnaturally changed the course of the Istros, which in its lower section does not run north-south, but east-west. The historian from Halicarnassus also enlarged the size of Maeotis, as did many other authors from the ancient Greek world.[32] The picture he gives of the size and shape of Crimea (Tauris) is also far from reality. His comparison of Scythia to Attica and of Crimea to Cape Sounion both provide clear evidence of this.[33] The true boundaries of the lands inhabited by the Scythians probably coincided more or less with those given by Herodotus, though they certainly did not form a square.

Like many other authors writing about the Black Sea steppe, Herodotus drew attention to the regions' large and numerous rivers and described them as a distinguishing feature of these lands.[34] According to him, there were as many of these rivers as there were canals in Egypt.[35] His description of the rivers clearly indicates[36] that the Greeks were much better acquainted with the western areas of Scythia, i.e. those between the Danube and the Dnieper

28 Hdt. IV 99–101 (p. 300, 302, 304).
29 Hdt. IV 101 (p. 302, 304).
30 Although Herodotus gives the length of one *stadion* as equal to 600 Greek feet (*podes*), the length of the foot varied in different parts of the Greek world. For more on this, see Engels 1985, 298–311.
31 Łowmiański 1964, 105.
32 Thomson 1948, 59.
33 Thomson 1948, 59; How, Welles 1912, 426; Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 650–652.
34 Hdt IV 82 (p. 284). Cf. How, Welles 1912, 321.
35 Hdt. IV 47 (p. 246).
36 Hdt. IV 47–58 (pp. 246–256).

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(Borysthenes). Herodotus mentions eight large rivers, of which those flowing through the western part of the region are conclusively identified. Istros (Danube), the largest of the rivers known to Herodotus, was the first to be described. Its large size was said to result from the numerous tributaries that fed it. The author gives the names of 16 such rivers, five of which flowed through Scythia. These were the Pyretos, Tiarantos, Araros, Naparis, and Ordessos, identified with today's Prut, Olt, Siret, Ialomița, and Argeș Rivers, respectively.[37] Herodotus also mentions another northern tributary of the Istros, which he calls the Maris River (usually identified with modern-day Mureș River) flowing from the lands inhabited by the Agathyrsi.[38] The second river in Scythia is the Tyres, understood to be the Dniester,[39] and the third is the Hypanis, today the Boh. Both rivers are said to flow from lakes. The fourth river described is the Borysthenes (Dnieper), which according to Herodotus was the largest river in Scythia after the Istros, as well as the most important in terms of its use.[40] Not only were the lushest pastures for grazing cattle found on the Borysthenes, the river was also abundant in fish (including *antakai* [sturgeon], said to be boneless),[41] its waters the clearest and cleanest to be found, the farmlands surrounding it able to produce the highest yields, and its mouth a good site for harvesting salt. Herodotus did not know what springs fed the Dnieper. He states only that it took 40 days to sail the length of the river from its mouth to reach a land called Gerros. He probably did not know anything about the rapids on the Dnieper, otherwise he would have compared them to the cataracts of the Nile. The Borysthenes was said to mingle with the Hypanis near the sea, with the two 'issuing into the same marsh'.[42] The next river in Scythia, located somewhere between the Dnieper and the Tanais, is an unresolved mystery for contemporary researchers. The Pantikapes, Hypakyris and Gerros were mentioned as the fifth, sixth and seventh rivers. It is doubtful that the real equivalents for these will ever be found.[43] This is least likely in the case of the Gerros, whose case should be considered a geographical curiosity. According to Herodotus, it was said to flow from the Borysthenes and enter into the Hypakyris.[44] The final, eighth Scythian river was the Tanais, today's Don.

37 Łowmiański 1975d, 105; Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 617.
38 Łowmiański 1975d, 105; Piskozub 1998, 200–201; Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 617.
39 Łowmiański 1975d, 105; Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 619.
40 Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 621–22.
41 How, Welles 1912, 324.
42 For more on the Dnieper: Piskozub 1999, 59–61.
43 Cf. Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 620–621.
44 The Greek scholar may have been referring to the phenomenon known to modern science as river bifurcation.

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Five rivers in Scythia had their sources in lakes; apart from the previously-mentioned Dniester and Boh, these were the Pantikapes, Hypakyris, and Don. Herodotus' description fits in the case of the Tyres (Dniester), though here, too, the lake is not large in size. The historian most likely sought to break with the well-established and extremely long-lived view that all rivers flowing south had their origins in the Riphean Mountains, which were said to run along the interior of the continent. While, it was undeniably a well-reasoned choice to point out that the origins of the Borysthenes were not known, his own concept turned out to be not much more in line with reality, and bears the hallmarks of a contrived theory.[45] The course of these rivers was sketched out very schematically, with some seeming to flow straight from north to south. Another of the rivers in the western area of the Great Steppe known to Herodotus may have been the Volga (Oaros), but he erroneously believed it flowed into the Maeotis.[46] He knew about the existence of the Caspian Sea, the actual drainage basin of the Volga, but, like most ancient geographers, he sometimes confused it with the Aral Sea. This is evidenced by his claim that the Araxes (Aras) flowed into the latter,[47] though he most probably meant the Syr-Darya. Nevertheless, unlike many later scholars of antiquity, he correctly considered the Caspian Sea to be a closed body of water with no contact with any other.[48]

Herodotus speaks about the flora and fauna of Scythia, as well as its climate.[49] He states that its terrain was flat, and that it was well supplied with water, and had lush grasslands.[50] There were no trees, with the exception of Hylaea (the Woodlands), located by the sea, east of the Borysthenes.[51] The Scythian climate was extremely harsh. The harsh winter lasted eight months, during which there was no rain (like in Greece) or thunder. The cold was so severe that when water was poured onto the ground it froze immediately rather than form mud. The sea was covered with ice so thick you could cross the Cimmerian Bosporus (the Kerch Strait). During the four months of summer there was constant rain and thunderstorms. It is clear that Herodotus was comparing the climate of Scythia with that of his homeland, which he considered the optimal natural environment.[52] This explains to a certain extent

45 How, Welles 1912, 426.
46 Hdt. IV 123–124 (pp. 322, 324). For a discussion on the possible identification of the Oaros River: Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 661–662.
47 Hdt. I 202 (p. 254). Cf. Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 213.
48 Hdt. I 202 (p. 254), III 115 (pp. 140, 142), IV 45 (pp. 244, 246).
49 Hdt. IV 28–31 (pp. 226–230).
50 Hdt. IV 47 (p. 246).
51 Hdt. IV 19 (p. 218).
52 How, Wells 1912, 427; Müller 1972, 125–127; Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 602–603.

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why some characteristics are clearly exaggerated, while other elements of his description, especially information on the sea freezing over, corresponded to reality.

Herodotus' attention was also drawn to the horses of the steppe, which seemed (unlike elsewhere, i.e., in Greece) able to endure difficult climatic conditions, especially the piercing cold.[53] Donkeys and mules, on the other hand, fared poorly in the bitter cold. According to Herodotus, these low temperatures were said to be the reason the cattle of the Black Sea nomads had small horns.[54] However, this latter hypothesis had little in common with the truth, as evidenced by the case of reindeer.

Herodotus' comments, while containing gross errors, is of fundamental importance for an understanding of the historical geography of the Black Sea steppe. Their particular value lies in the fact that they come from an author who based his research on what he himself witnessed as well as information from relatively reliable sources.[55] The works of later scholars added only modestly to his legacy. In many respects, they were even a step backwards in terms of their knowledge of areas north of Pontos. Herodotus' relatively accurate description of the area of 'ancient Scythia' (ἀρχαίη Σκυθιή) and his labelling its inhabitants Scythians gave way to an older tendency to call all regions north of the Pontos Euxeinos (Black Sea) Scythia and their inhabitants Scythians.[56] This was probably the dominant view in Ionic chorography, the most famous representative of which was Hecataeus of Miletus (6th century BCE).[57] It also prevailed in the historical geography of the Hellenistic era, supported by works by Ephorus of Cyme and Eratosthenes.[58] Their point of view was shared by Strabo, who wrote in the first century CE.[59] Moreover, in terms of research methods, the place of personal observation and direct interview, so important for Herodotus, was taken by "library erudition". Geographical works were more and more a compilation of both new and old, outdated information. The result was an image that represented the author's personal vision, and which often had little in common with reality.

In some cases, such as the anonymous treatise *On Airs, Waters, and Places*, the contents allow us to deduce certain facts about Scythia, even though the description was provided to serve a different function. The unknown author

53 Hdt. IV 28 (pp. 226, 228).
54 Hdt. IV 29 (p. 228).
55 Müller 1972, 103.
56 Kretschmer 1921a, 943.
57 Harmatta 1941, 57–61.
58 Zwolski 1984, 17.
59 Strabo I 2.28 (p. 124); VII 3.13–17 (pp. 214–222); VII 4.5 (pp. 238–242).

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of the above work, once commonly identified with Hippocrates, lived around the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE,[60] chronologically close to the time of Herodotus. However, unlike the historian from Halicarnassus, he considered the Sarmatians, who inhabited the lands close to the Maeotis, to be Scythians.[61] He devoted a short description to them and their land, which though it concurs in some points with the information supplied by Herodotus, is essentially aimed to demonstrating the influence of the environment on the characteristics of different races. He describes the Scythian desert (ἡ Σκυθέων ἐρημίη), as he calls the lands under discussion, as a high-lying steppe with abundant meadows and an ample water supply provided by large rivers.[62] The climate there was very harsh. The summer were extremely short, lasting only a few days, while during the rest of the year winter prevailed. The reason for this constant cold was said to be the flat terrain and geographic location of Scythia. Farther north, there was a broad plain unprotected by any mountain range, which exposed the land to cold northern winds; meanwhile, warm southern winds were extremely rare. In addition, the entire region was shrouded in dense fog.[63] This harsh climate was said to shape the physical condition of the people and animals that lived there. The inhabitants of Scythia were therefore not a very fertile people. Due to their physical weakness, they could not perform work that required strong effort.[64] They bred sheep, horses and cattle, and lived in wagons pulled by hornless oxen. This lack of horns was said to be an anomaly caused by the cold that prevailed in Scythia, a point on which this writer shared the views of Herodotus.[65] The few wild animals that lived in the region were very small. Nearly all of these creatures lived in underground burrows, both as a means of shelter from the bitter cold and due to the barrenness of the landscape.[66]

Against this backdrop, Strabo's *Geography* (1st century BCE–1st century CE) makes a somewhat better impression, as apart from its fairly high level of erudition, it also contains a considerable amount of information derived from various travels.[67] However, Strabo does not add much in his writings to the picture painted earlier by Herodotus. The Sarmatians residing on the Black Sea steppe are called by him "Scythians". The last of the known Scythians are the Roxolani,

60 Müller 1972, 137–145.
61 Hippocr. XVII (p. 116).
62 Hippocr. XVIII (p. 118).
63 Hippocr. XIX (pp. 120, 122).
64 Hippocr. XIX (p. 122).
65 Hippocr. XVIII (p. 118).
66 Hippocr. XIX (p. 120).
67 Müller 1980, 107–111; Strzelczyk 2000, 228–234.

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a nomadic group whose encampments lay between the Borysthenes and the Tanais.[68] However, the Sarmatians and Scythians also had settlements beyond the Maeotis, neighbouring so-called "Scythians of the East" (sic!).[69] Strabo also considered the people we know as the Tauri to also be Scythians.[70] However, he knew nothing about the lands stretching north of the Sarmatians. He could not say if there were any other peoples living north of them, or if the lands of the Sarmatians extended to the Northern Ocean. In general, we can say that Strabo considered all the peoples of the north to be Scythians.

Somewhat fuller data is available on the Black Sea steppe's fauna. Strabo mentions that the horses bred there are small, while the sheep can be large in size.[71] He repeats earlier reports about the hornless Scythian cattle, adding that some specimens have their horns sawed off because it is allegedly the part of the body least resistant to cold.[72] Strabo lastly discusses the hunting of various animals. Deer, roe deer and wild pigs are the species targeted by hunters in marshy areas (Crimea, estuaries), while in the steppe the onager (ὁ ὄναγρος, literally 'wild ass') and saiga antelope (ὁ κόλος) are hunted.[73] The term onager is also used in reference to the kulan (or jigitai), a subspecies of the Asian donkey (*Equus hemionus*).[74] In the case of the saiga antelope Strabo provides a detailed and essentially accurate description.[75]

Strabo provides little new information on the climate. He stresses that winters on the steppe are very harsh, especially in the area between the Borysthenes and the Maeotis. Like Herodotus, he mentions the freezing of Lake Maeotis as proof of the exceptional cold. He cites an interesting story about how coastal dwellers fished under the ice for *antakaios* (sturgeon), whose size he compares to that of a dolphin.[76]

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68 Strabo VII 3.13–17 (pp. 214–222).

69 Strabo I 2.28 (p. 124).

70 Strabo VII 4.5 (p. 240).

71 Strabo VII 3.18 (p. 224).

72 Strabo VII 3.18 (p. 224).

73 Strabo VII 4.8 (p. 248).

74 Cf. Malinowski 2003, 76; see also the accounts of William of Rubruck and Maciej of Miechów cited below.

75 'And among the quadrupeds there is what is called the "colos" [κόλος]; it is between the deer and ram in size, it is white, is swifter than they, and drinks through its nostrils into its head, and then from this storage supplies itself for several days, so that it can easily live in the waterless country' (Strabo, III 249). The only fantastic element in this information is that about the Saiga antelope storing water in its head. Malinowski 2003, 133.

76 Strabo VII 3.18 (pp. 224, 226).

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Neither Pomponius Mela's *De situ orbis libri III*, the first Roman work of geography,[77] nor Pliny the Elder's encyclopaedic *Naturalis historia*[78] provide much new information about the region under discussion. Both works are largely compilations of material from previous authors. Like the above-mentioned works by other Romans, the *Geographia* of Ptolemy (2nd century CE), the last great ancient work of chorography, was a product of library study.[79] In the regions under discussion, Ptolemy places two Sarmatias: one European, the other Asian. The former stretches from the Vistula River in the west to the Maeotian Swamp and Tanais River in the east.[80] The latter begins in European Sarmatia and ends on the Rha (Volga) River,[81] which marked the beginning of Scythia, which stretched to the east to Serica (probably China). Ptolemy divides Scythia into two parts, ἡ ἐντὸς Ἰμάους ὄρους Σκυθία "before the Imaos Mountains" and ἡ ἐκτὸς Ἰμάους ὄρους Σκυθία "beyond the Imaos Mountains",[82] which are usually identified with either the Altai Mountains or some imaginary extension of the Himalayas.[83] In Ptolemy's *Geographia*, these vast areas were populated by a multitude of peoples, most of whom are unknown to us, giving rise to the suspicion that the names are fictitious.[84] There was also a number of peoples on Ptolemy's map, who in reality either no longer existed or who were moved by the author quite arbitrarily to the peripheries of the known world. For example, he claimed the existence of the fictitious Hyperboreans, the Abioi and Hippemolgoi of Homer, and the Androphagi of old Ionian lore.

In the Middle Ages, the appearance of new peoples, both on the Black Sea steppe and in their hinterland, resulted in a significant increase in geographical knowledge. This was mainly due to the active political and trade contacts maintained between the Rus' state and Byzantium. The functioning of a trade route running 'from the Varangians to the Greeks' led to an improved knowledge of the central and upper reaches of the Dnieper River. The first comprehensive description of the route, including information on hitherto unknown rapids, was compiled in the mid-tenth century. It was part (Chapter 9) of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' *De administrando imperio*.[85] The work,

77 Müller 1980, 123–137; Strzelczyk 2000, p. 244.
78 Plinius IV 82–95 (pp. 180–192). Cf. Müller 1980, 137–150; Strzelczyk 2000, 263–266.
79 Müller 1980, 167–175; Strzelczyk 2000, 297–301.
80 Kl.Ptol. III 5.1–6 (p. 298).
81 Kl.Ptol. V 9.1 (p. 530); VIII 18.2 (p. 848).
82 Kl.Ptol. VI 14–15 (pp. 656–669).
83 Kretschmer 1921a, 943–946; Łowmiański 1975d, 113.
84 Łowmiański 1975d, 114–115; 1975c, 66–70.
85 DAI IX (pp. 57–63). Cf. Kuryłowicz, Kowalenko 1961, 349–350; DAI – Com., 38–43, 45–53; Piskozub 1999, 65.

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which is predominantly devoted to political matters, also contains a geographical description of the lands north of Byzantium (Chapter 42). The description of the region is quite concise: it begins with Thessaloniki, moves on to Belgrade, and then describes the area around Dristra on the lower Danube, the Black Sea steppe (then controlled by the Pechenegs), and the Khazar fortress Sarkel on the Don, before finally ending with the western Caucasus. The style and construction of the description is not very sophisticated, and in many respects resembles an itinerary, with distances given between successive stages of the route. It is worth noting that the author's attention is drawn to the numerous rivers flowing through the Black Sea steppe, the largest of those mentioned being the Dnieper (Δάναπρις) and Dniestr (Δάναστρις) Rivers.[86]

Some remarks on the Black Sea-Caspian steppe are included in the *Ystoria Mongalorum* of Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, Pope Innocent IV's envoy to the Great Khan. Carpine travelled through the region between February 26 and April 4, 1246. It was still winter on the steppe at that time. *Comania* (land of the Cumans), as Carpine calls it, is completely flat and has four large rivers: the Dnieper, Don, Volga, and Yaik (Ural). Each of them is used as a base by a different Mongol leader. The author mistakenly stated that all the rivers flowed into one "great sea". One can assume from the overall account that the mistake was probably due to an excessive enlargement of the Black Sea. More important, however, is that according to Carpine, during his journey, all the rivers, as well as the sea, were frozen solid. The cold had frozen the seas waters as far out as three leagues (*leucas*) from the shore,[87] which allowed it to be used as a route for travellers. According to the author, all the rivers, especially the Volga, were rich in fish.[88]

Friar Benedict, known as Benedict the Pole (*Benedictus Polonus*), travelled with Carpine as a translator. He was a Franciscan monk like the leader of the mission, and had joined the envoy in Wrocław.[89] Benedict's relation is much shorter, so the information found in it on the Eastern European steppe is more sparse. The author gives the name of the Dnieper and Don, mentions a meeting with the Batu Khan on the Itil (Volga), but wrongly identifies it as the Tanais.[90] He also states elsewhere that *Comania* was 'once called Pontus'.[91] This term is probably used in reference to the Black Sea-Caspian steppe. Benedict makes

86 DAI XLII (pp. 183–189). Cf. Obolensky 2000, 24–41.

87 A measure of distance that ranges in practice from 2 to 3.5 km. Cf. Schmieder 1997, 152 (note 202).

88 di Carpine IX 13 (pp. 309–10).

89 Ben.Pol. I (p. 135).

90 Ben.Pol. IV (p. 136).

91 '[…] hec terra olim dicebatur Pontus […]'. Ben.Pol. IV (p. 137).

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the same mistake as Carpine, significantly increasing the size of the Black Sea, into which the Dnieper, Don, and Itil (Volga) are all said to flow. This mistake is confirmed by the fact that during the next stage of the journey leading through Asia, Benedict was said to see 'the Maeotis',[92] which in fact could have been the Aral Sea, and 'to the left', the Caspian Sea,[93] which should probably be identified as Lake Balkhash. What is valuable here is the information provided by Benedict about the great amount of wormwood growing in *Comania*.[94]

Less than a decade after Carpine and his entourage, another Franciscan clergyman, William of Rubruck, travelled deep into Asia and described the journey in his *Itinerarium*. His expedition was also diplomatic in nature, but this time the mandate for the mission was issued by the King of France, Louis IX. Rubruck eventually reached the court of Möngke Khan in Karakorum, having met earlier with Batu Khan, ruler of the Golden Horde. He began his journey in Constantinople, from where he sailed to Sudak in the Crimea, then set off for the steppe in the summer of 1253. His account is to a large extent confirmed by the observations of his religious brethren, mentioned above. One important difference, however, is that he saw the Black Sea-Caspian steppe in summer and autumn. He was struck by the seemingly endless expanse of the steppe plains, which he compared to a huge sea.[95] The monk's attention was also drawn to the area's large rivers, especially the Tanais and Itil (Volga). The first one he compared in terms of size to the Seine; the second one is said to be four times wider than the Parisian river.[96] Like Carpine, he was captivated by the abundance of fish in the Don, Volga and other rivers flowing through the steppe.[97] Unlike Pope Innocent's IV envoy, he noted that the steppe dwellers were not able to catch them and were not particularly interested in them. They consumed only the largest specimens, the meat of which could be eaten just like that of a sheep.[98] In terms of the fauna, Rubruck's attention is drawn to the large number of species of mice living on the steppe. Some were consumed by the nomads themselves, others were given as feed to the birds they bred.[99] The French ruler's envoy also saw other rodents, most probably marmots,[100]

92 Ben.Pol. VIII (p. 138).
93 Ben.Pol. VIII (p. 139).
94 Ben.Pol. VI (p. 137).
95 Rubruck XIII 3 (p. 195); XXII 2 (p. 222).
96 Rubruck XIII 7, 10 (pp. 196–198); XIV 2 (p. 199); XVI 5 (p. 205); XVIII 4 (pp. 212–213).
97 Rubruck XIII 10 (p. 197); XXXVII 12 (p. 316).
98 Rubruck XIII 10 (p. 197).
99 Rubruck V 1 (p. 180).
100 Rubruck V 1 (p. 180). Anastasius van den Wyngaert (p. 180, note 1) identified the animal described by Rubruck as a souslik (*Spermophilus*), referred to in Turkish as a sour. Mikołaj Olszewski, author of the Polish translation of *Itinerarium* (Olszewski 2007, 84) concurs.

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which the locals called *sogur*, and a creature he describes as a rabbit with a long black-and-white-tipped tail like that of a cat.[101] The marmots were said to live in colonies of 20–30 individuals and – due to the fact they hibernated for six months a year – constituted easy pickings for the nomads who hunted them. According to Rubruck, the steppe was home to many other edible animals. Although he did not see any deer and saw very few hares, he speaks of seeing numerous gazelles and herds of wild asses, which reminded the monk of European mules, though they surpassed them in terms of speed.[102] Rubruck also mentions a creature he calls an *arcali*.[103] The description and the name itself both match that of the wild sheep *argali*, though there is reason to question whether he really saw such creatures on the steppe, especially in the region under discussion. Rubruck also confirms the presence of camels,[104] which were used as draft animals, and game birds, including hawks and falcons.[105] In the *Itinerarium* there is also an interesting description of the Crimea,[106] which the authors says is largely a vast plain, five days' journey across. It is separated from the southern end of the peninsula by a mountain range, the northern slope of which gently transitions into a beautiful forest, filled – according to the author – with springs and streams. At the peninsula's northern end there is said to be something like a vast levee, stretching from one sea to the other. William of Rubruck also noted the presence of salt-bearing lakes at the far ends of the peninsula, the exploitation of which was said to bring considerable income to the Mongolian rulers.

A number of descriptions of the steppes of western Eurasia were written by Muslim authors in the Middle Ages. These relations have a particular value and colour, because unlike Latin or Byzantine writers, their authors were less concerned with political matters and paid more attention to ethnographic and geographical issues. An interesting description of Khwarazm, the Transvolga steppe and Volga Bulgaria can be found in Ahmed ibn Fadlan's work. The author, an envoy of the Caliph al-Muqtadir, left Baghdad on 21 June 921 on a diplomatic mission to the ruler of Volga Bulgaria,[107] finally reaching

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P. Jackson and D. Morgan state that the original Turkish name of the animal was soghur/sughur, a term used to refer to a marmot (Jackson 1990, 84 (note 2)).

101 Rubruck V 2 (p. 180). Olszewski identifies the animal as a gerbil (2007, 84 (note 44)).

102 Rubruck V 2 (p. 180); XXII 3 (p. 222). Rubruck provides the Mongol name, though in a distorted form, as culam.

103 Rubruck V 2 (p. 180).

104 Rubruck II 3 (p. 173); II 5 (p. 174).

105 Rubruck V 3 (p. 180).

106 Rubruck I 12–13 (pp. 170–71).

107 ibn Fadlan, 190/191; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 87; Frye 2005, 26; Kovalevskii 1956, 121. Cf. Togan 1939, 5: April 2, 921.

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his destination the following spring. His journey led him through Khorasan (Merv), the Karakum desert, Transoxania (Mā warā' an-Nahr) to Khwārazm, where he spent the winter (September 5, 921–March 2, 922).[108] He described the terrible cold he experienced in that land. The Amu Darya River was covered with a sheet of ice 17 spans thick,[109] and the inhabitants of Khwārazm had to cover their water-containers with sheepskins to prevent them from freezing and breaking.[110] By the middle of February a thaw began,[111] so the Caliph's envoy was soon able to continue his journey, which took him through the Ustyurt Plateau and the steppelands between the Emba and Ural Rivers, to Bashkiria and finally Volga Bulgaria. In the first half of the 10th century, the region was inhabited by Turkish peoples, the characteristics of which are described by Ahmed ibn Fadlan.[112] The envoy wrote less about the natural conditions, but here his attention was drawn mainly to the numerous rivers in today's western Kazakhstan that he had to cross. As a result of the spring thaw, they were all of considerable size, though the largest and most powerful of those he saw was the Ural (Yaik, Arabic H.ğ).[113] Its strong current made it very difficult for the travellers to cross the river without suffering considerable losses. After 70 days of travel from Khwārazm, Ahmed ibn Fadlan finally arrived in Volga Bulgaria. Here he was particularly fascinated by the extraordinary shortness of the summer night.[114]

Another memorable work by an Arab author is the description of the so-called Kipchak Steppe (Desht-i Qipchaq) written by a famous Moroccan traveller (born February 24, 1304 in Tangier) Ibn Battuta.[115] It is part of an extensive work that translators and publishers have often given the title *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*.[116] During his 25-year expedition, the Moroccan visited lands

108 ibn Fadlan, 190–201; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 87–90; Togan 1939, 5–14; Kovalevskii 1956, 121–124; Frye 2005, 26–32.

109 ibn Fadlan, 196/7; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 90; Togan 1939, 13; Kovalevskii 1956, 123; Frye 2005, 30.

110 ibn Fadlan, 198/199; Kovalevskii 1956, 124; Frye 2005, 31. Cf. Togan 1939, 15; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 90: in German and Polish translation "well" instead of "container".

111 ibn Fadlan, 198/9; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 90–91; Togan 1939, 15, 17; Kovalevskii 1956, 124, 125; Frye 2005, 31.

112 ibn Fadlan, 200–217; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 92–98; Togan 1939, 18–39; Kovalevskii 1956, 125–131; Frye 2005, 32–43.

113 ibn Fadlan 214/215; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 97, 149; Togan 1939, 34 (note 1); Kovalevskii 1956, 192 (note 311); Frye 2005, 42.

114 ibn Fadlan, 222–225; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 102; Togan 1939, 54–55; Kovalevskii 1956, 135; Frye 2005, 50.

115 Gibb 1958, X; Zajączkowski 1962, VIII.

116 Zajączkowski 1962, XIII.

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ranging from the Maghreb to Sumatra. In the early 1330s (before 1333), he also reached the lands controlled by the rulers of the Golden Horde.[117] Starting from Crimea, Ibn Battuta travelled through the eastern part of the Black Sea steppe and the Caspian steppe to Astrakhan. He also visited, or at least so he claimed to visit,[118] Volga Bulgaria, but his information on this area is meagre and not particularly original.

The Kipchak Steppe enchanted Ibn Battuta, much as it had the other authors discussed above, primarily with its natural landscape. His relation begins with the following observation: 'This place where we landed was in the wilderness known as Dasht-i Qifjaq (dasht in the language of the Turks means 'wilderness'). This wilderness is green and grassy, with no trees nor hills, high or low, […].'[119] The author adds that a lack of wood for fuel forced the nomads to use dried animal dung for this purpose. The natural conditions of the steppe, he said, were especially favourable for animal husbandry. This was due to the excellent quality of the grass, which could be used like barley as animal feed. Therefore, the herds there were very well-fed and reproduced abundantly without any particular effort on the part of their owners. The animals most commonly raised were horses, camels and cattle.[120] Ibn Battuta devoted special attention to the breeding of horses, which generated the most income for the nomads, who had earned an excellent reputation far beyond their country's borders (e.g. in India).[121] During his stay in Astrakhan, Ibn Battuta witnessed the freezing over of the Volga. This allowed him to convey the interesting information that the local ruler had ordered an area of the frozen river to be covered with straw in order to facilitate the movement of caravans across the ice.[122]

The beginning of the modern era (16th–17th century) brought a decisive increase in geographical knowledge. This also applies to that of the Eastern European steppe. In 1517, *Treatise on the Two Sarmatias: European and Asian* was published. The book's author, who made clear references to the work of Ptolemy, was Maciej of Miechów, a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In the book, the scholar sought to combat some of the unfounded beliefs about the geography of Eastern Europe. The book provided an interesting description of the region and its inhabitants, including the peoples living

117 Gibb 1958, XI–XII; Zajączkowski 1962, XI.

118 Some scholars have doubts about whether Ibn Battuta ever travelled to Volga Bulgaria. Gibb 1958, XII; Ibn Battuta, 356.

119 ibn Battuta, 111; Gibb 1959, 470.

120 ibn Battuta, 113; Gibb 1959, 473.

121 ibn Battuta, 115; Gibb 1959, 478.

122 ibn Battuta, 124–125; Gibb 1959, 497.

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on the Black Sea-Caspian steppe. He described the land of the Transvolga Tatars as a flat plain without mountains, forests or trees, but abundant in grasses and wild animals, including deer, roe deer, wild goats and Saiga antelope.[123] He also described the Volga, which before it ran into the sea, divided into 25 large branches, each of which was supposed to be equal in size to the Tiber or Vistula. Maciej of Miechów erroneously assumed, however, that the Volga flowed into the Black Sea.[124] The rivers of European and Asian Sarmatia were said to be extremely abundant in fish. There were so many in the Volga that the Tatars were ostensibly able to spear them with their sabres from the shore.[125] The Don River valley was covered with numerous fruit trees, mainly apple trees. There were hives of wild bees in the oaks, and in smaller numbers on the pines, growing along the river.[126] Unlike most of the authors mentioned above, Maciej of Miechów described the steppe, especially its European part, as a land extremely rich in fertile soil, home to a great number of animals, and rich in mineral resources, including chalk and salt.[127] A similarly enthusiastic vision of the 'Wild Fields' was produced by Michael the Lithuanian, who in the mid-sixteenth century also pointed to the incredible fertility of the local land, and the abundance of game animals and waterfowl and the many fish in the rivers.[128]

Much valuable information on the Black Sea-Caspian steppe is contained in the diaries of members of 16th-century diplomatic missions. The steppe formed a buffer zone between Russia, the Turkish Sultanate, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is therefore no surprise that its inhabitants often became caught up in the political dealings of neighbouring states. The two relations analyzed below were produced as a result of missions the authors carried out as political envoys.

Andrzej Taranowski was a diplomat in the service of Zygmunt August. Between spring and winter of 1569 (he returned to Warsaw on December 24) he carried out a mission for the Polish king that led him from Constantinople

123 Math.Mie. I 1.6 (p. 141).

124 Math.Mie. I 1.7 (p. 142), II 2.1 (pp. 191–192).

125 Math.Mie. I 1.7 (p. 143).

126 Math.Mie. I 1.7 (p. 142).

127 Math.Mie. II 1.1 (pp. 172–174).

128 Mich.Lit. IX (p. 33); Khoroshkevich 1994, 96–97. Michael the Lithuanian cites several examples of the rich fauna of the steppe zone and the forest-step zone of today's Ukraine. He states, for example, that in the Transdniestrian region, bison, deer and wild donkeys were hunted mainly for their hides. Only the tenderloin was used as meat. Dogs were fed venison and fish.

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to the Tatar Khanates on the Black and Caspian Seas.[129] We do not know the exact purpose of his mission, but that is not of major consequence. What is important, rather, is that as a result of this journey, during which the author travelled to Astrakhan, a concise report was produced, known as a *Short Description of the Route from Poland to Constantinople*. In it, Taranowski described his journey through the steppe, starting with his departure from Constantinople (August 14). The envoy of the last of the Jagiellonian kings journeyed along the following route: Constantinopole – Kiliya (on the lower Danube) – Akkerman (Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi, at the mouth of the Dniester) – Ochakiv – Azaq (Azov, at the mouth of the Don) – Astrakhan. He arrived in the Astrakhan at the end of September, then returned to Bilhorod by the route previously travelled, and from there headed north to Poland. A number of Taranowski's observations confirm the information found in previous descriptions. Zygmunt August's envoy wrote in more detail about the steppe east of the Dnieper River. Like many other writers, he stated that the area he travelled through was flat, with grass as the predominant vegetation.[130] The countryside was woodless, with small but dense oaks and some sloe trees growing along the Mus River (today's Mius), which flowed into the Sea of Azov.[131] Due to a lack of wood, the Tatars used grass to light the fire when they wanted to cook a meal.[132] Among the animals raised on the steppe, dominant were sheep, horses, cows, steers and camels.[133] Grass was, of course, the basic feed for these animals all year round. The Perekop Tatars tended to overwinter on the Sea of Azov between the Gruzsky Elanchik, Mokry Elanchyk, and Mus Rivers. This is where the grasses were highest, allowing the cattle to pull it up from under the snow in winter. There was also a bounty of wild animals, especially roe deer, deer, wild horses and pigs. Finally, the rivers mentioned above were abundant in fish.[134] Among the wild fauna on the steppe there are many different species of birds. Taranowski mentions eagles, vultures, ravens, and kite, adding that there are many other species living there, as well.[135] Foxes and wolves lived on the Zadonets Steppe, but there were also many snakes, about which the author writes:

129 Taranowski, 203; Tardy, Vásáry 1974.
130 Taranowski, 206 et passim.
131 Taranowski, 207.
132 Taranowski, 210.
133 Taranowski, 206, 209.
134 Taranowski, 207.
135 Taranowski, 209.

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> We found many vile reptiles, snakes as thick as a human leg, and very long. And in some places, when we found ourselves by the lake, we could see so many snake skins that the grass was white from them, and we were afraid to look, but from a distance it looked as if it had been covered with a cloth.[136]

Taranowski also mentions the climate of the steppe. In October cool winds blew and icy rain fell intensively for extended periods of time (three days). At night there were severe frosts that even killed people.[137] During this time of the year, the Tartars would go with their herds to their wintering grounds. Both Perekop Tatars and the Nogai Tatars overwintered by the Sea of Azov. The latter made their winter encampments between the Don and Kagalnik Rivers.[138]

A concise but very valuable description of the Dnieper was included in the diary of Erich Lassota von Steblau. The author visited Ukraine in 1594 as a diplomatic agent of the Habsburgs, most probably tasked with the job of recruiting Cossacks. In his diary he included a brief, but accurate description of the rapids on the Dnieper River. He mentioned there were 13 of them, but pointed out that if you did not include Voronova Zavora, there were only 12. These rocky obstacles stretched on the river for seven miles. The author briefly described each of the rapids and the road down the river.[139] It is worth noting that this description corresponds closely with the information provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.

Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan's account provides an excellent supplement to the accounts of the two previous authors. Beauplan was not a diplomat, but an engineer who built a number of fortifications in Ukraine. He was also a cartographer. In the mid-17th century, as a supplement to a set of maps he had produced, he wrote a work entitled *Description d'Ukranie*. This work is of special value because it came from the pen of a researcher who relied mainly on his own observations of a land he had come to know very well. Beauplan spent a total of 17 years in the borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[140] In his work, he gives us a very interesting description of the Dnieper. Although he does not list the names of all 13 rapids, contenting himself with a description of the general features of this geographical phenomenon,[141]

136 Taranowski, 213–214.
137 Taranowski, 214–215.
138 Taranowski, 215.
139 Lassota, 66–67.
140 Beauplan, 1–6; Wójcik 1972, 38–41.
141 Beauplan, 52–53.

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he does recount other aspects of the river's natural environment in a detailed and skillful manner. He describes the islands on the Dnieper River, enumerates the tributaries in its lower reaches, and lists the fords and other river crossings. He also makes brief mentions of the vegetation on the river's islands (e.g., the oaks on Khortitsa).[142] Next, he characterizes the north-western and western shores of the Black Sea up to Varna. He then describes the estuaries of the major rivers (Boh, Dniester, Danube), and the landscape along the coastline.[143] He also describes the natural conditions on the Crimean peninsula.[144] We can clearly see here that Beauplan had a much better knowledge of the western part of Ukraine, the western shores of the Black Sea, and Crimea. He was not able to provide much information about the eastern, Transdnieprian part of the Black Sea Steppe.

Beauplan devotes significant attention to steppe fauna. He mentions the annoyance caused by the local flies and mosquitoes and how to protect against them. Locusts, which also plague the region,[145] swarm into the Ukrainian steppe from the southeast (mainly from the Caucasus).[146] He characterizes the bobak marmot, a steppe rodent, in great detail in terms of both its habits and appearance.[147] According to Beauplan, it was most commonly found between the Sula and Supoi Rivers. In terms of birds, he mentions quails,[148] and notes that pelicans and cranes live along the banks of rivers.[149] In the so-called "Wild Fields", the areas along the Dnieper rapids are home to Saiga antelope, deer, wild goats, huge wild boars, and herds of wild horses numbering 50–60 individuals. Beyond the Dnieper River there were buffalo, white hares and wildcats. Finally, in the Transdniester Region one could find rams.[150] The author's observations about the climate confirmed the information contained in earlier accounts. Spring in western Ukraine begins in mid-April, the summer is mostly dry, and winter very harsh. For Beauplan, who came from a country with a mild climate, the severity of the winters was cause for worry, as evidenced by the descriptions contained in the work of people freezing to death.[151]

142 Beauplan, 53–56.
143 Beauplan, 56–59.
144 Beauplan, 59–61.
145 Its appearance should be read as evidence of advanced anthropogenic changes in the natural environment. Cf. Chibilyov 2002, 258.
146 Beauplan, 86–89.
147 Beauplan, 90–91.
148 Beauplan, 91.
149 Beauplan, 92.
150 Beauplan, 91–92.
151 Beauplan, 92–95.

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The last of the accounts worth mentioning here is *Travel to the Steppes of Astrakhan and the Caucasus*, written in French by Jan Potocki, a scholar, traveller and writer living at the turn of the 18th and 19th century. He wrote his account following an expedition that took place in 1797–1798. Particularly noteworthy is the information provided on the trans-Don steppe and the eastern part of the North Caucasus. The steppeland, which begins beyond the Khopior River, struck Potocki with its seeming unboundness.[152] The Zadonets Steppe, both near the Medveditsa River and between the bends of the Don and Volga Rivers, is described as a dry and sandy plain exposed to gusty winds,[153] which gave him the impression of a completely lifeless desert. Barren, dry soil was said to show through from beneath low, yellowed grass. The grass displayed a green hue only in ravines and places sheltered from the wind. In some places, Potocki wrote, springs flowed and trees grew at the bottom of deep ravines. On the open steppe there were no trees at all.[154] South of Tsaritsyn (today's Volgograd), the steppe changed colour, taking on a blue-green hue due to the wormwood growing there.[155] Finally, in the eastern part of the North Caucasus, in the region of the Nogai Steppe, only thin, sparse tufts of grass grew. There were also areas called *kum* ('sands') by the locals; in summer they were covered with yellow flowers and grass that made good, healthy fodder for cattle. In spring and winter, these were ideal sites for encampments.[156] Potocki's attention was also attracted by the Volga, which he travelled on from Sarpeta to Astrakhan during the spring flooding (on May 26, 1797). The river presented an incredible view at that time. Within its flooded riverbed, archipelagos of islands were formed, between which forests jutted out from below the waters, with the trees making it difficult to sail down the river.[157] In the trans-Don region, Potocki saw bobak marmots, which he thought looked like giant alpine marmots.[158] In this region he also observed a great number of ground squirrels (sousliks) and packs of wild dogs.[159] Mosquitoes plagued both people and animals in the area.[160] Saiga antelope and eagles were found in the environs of Tsaritsyn,[161] while in the Volga region, there were pelicans, cormorants and

152 Potocki, 287–288.
153 Potocki, 291, 293.
154 Potocki, 293.
155 Potocki, 304.
156 Potocki, 405.
157 Potocki, 294, 299–300.
158 Potocki, 286–287, 288.
159 Potocki, 290, 296.
160 Potocki, 288, 291.
161 Potocki, 293–294, 399–401.

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water snakes.[162] The steppe of the Caspian Depression was perfect for breeding camels, which are very fond of wormwood.[163] Here, too, Potocki saw jerboa (*Jaculus jaculus*),[164] and noted the presence of pheasant on the Nogai Steppe.[165]

162 Potocki, 299, 303, 308.
163 Potocki, 304.
164 Potocki, 304.
165 Potocki, 400–401.

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CHAPTER 2

Black Sea-Caspian Steppe: Outline of Ethnic and Political Relations to the End of the Ninth Century

2.1 Era of the Dominance of Iranian Nomads

The accounts described in the previous chapter, despite having been written in various epochs by authors from different cultures, display a high degree of uniformity in their descriptions of the natural environment of the Black Sea and Caspian steppe. In these accounts we find explicit and implicit expressions of the belief that this region constituted an ideal natural habitat for nomadic peoples. According to available sources, pastoral communities have dominated the steppe since the dawn of history. It was on the Pontic steppe, for example, that the ancients placed the home of the Galaktophagoi (milk eaters) and the Hippemolgoi (mare milkers),[1] whom they identified as Cimmerians,[2] a people mentioned in the *Odyssey*. It is difficult to say whether this identification is correct. If the Cimmerians had indeed established settlements on the Black Sea steppe at that time, they would be the first nomadic group known (i.e., identified by name) to have inhabited this region.[3] At present, however, there is controversy surrounding the group's link to archaeological remains of the Chernogorivka and Novocherkassk cultures (10th–7th centuries BCE), whose people inhabited vast stretches of the Black Sea-Caspian steppe. Some scholars associate these cultures with a separate group of Iranian nomads, said to have been forerunners of the Agathyrsi, who are mentioned by Herodotus.[4] Others believe that the Cimmerians may have never settled as far west as the Black Sea steppe,[5] and question the credibility of claims, most often based on Herodotus' account in *Histories*, that they inhabited this region.[6]

1 Hom.Il. XIII 5–6 (p. 1).

2 Hom.Od. XI 15–20 (pp. 123–4). The Cimmerians were said to milk mares by Callimachus of Cyerene (*Hymn III* (*to Artemis*), verses 252–254: Call., 82, 83), which, according to some researchers, is supposed to prove their identification by the Hellenic poet with Homer's Hippemolgoi. Cf. Chochorowski 1993, 10. Other ancient authors identified the Hippemolgoi and the Galaktophagoi with the Scythians. Cf. Fr.Hes. 150; Strabo VII 3.7 (pp. 196–198), 3.9 (pp. 204–208).

3 Chochorowski 1993, 10; Harmatta 1970, 7–8; Czeglédy 1983, 28.

4 Olbrycht 2000a, 102–105.

5 Olbrycht 2000, 71–99.

6 Hdt. IV 11–12 (pp. 210–213).

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The first clashes between the Cimmerians and Scythians took place when the first group still inhabited lands on what Herodotus calls the 'southern sea', identifiable as the Caspian Sea. These conflicts, most likely the result of migratory pressures, triggered a further wave of resettlement in the region. The defeated Cimmerians were driven from the lands they inhabited, with some resettling in the South Caucasus. By the end of the 8th century BCE, the Cimmerians had developed an active presence in West Asia, with settlements most likely having been established earlier on the Kura River (in today's southern Georgia). From these areas, they regularly carried out raids that filled the inhabitants of the Middle East with fear.[7]

The Cimmerians are known from Assyrian diplomatic sources as the Gimirrai, and are referred to in the prophecies of Ezekiel as the Gomer people.[8] Around 715 BCE Rusa I, the ruler of the Urartu state, attempted to wipe them out. A battle that took place near Cappadocia (Kappadokía) ended in victory for the Cimmerians.[9] Assyrian documents mention the Gimirrai again around 680 BCE, when they fought against Assyria alongside the Medes. This alliance ended badly for the Cimmerians, whose forces were defeated by Esarhaddon in ca. 677 BCE. Some of their fighters then passed into the service of the Assyrian ruler, while others fought under Midas, King of Phrygia, though they later shifted their allegiance and joined the side of the Urartian king Rusa II.[10] We read about the Cimmerians once again when they join forces with the Treri, a Thracian tribe, around 660 BCE in an attack on Lydia in Asia Minor. The Lydian King Gyges was killed in combat (ca. 654 BCE), and was succeeded by his son Ardys, who rebuilt the kingdom and pushed back the Cimmerians, who suffered a definitive defeat at the hands of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in 637/636 BCE, after which they ceased to be a threat. They settled in isolated groups in Asia Minor, where they were eventually assimilated into other groups.[11]

The defeat of the Cimmerians, however, did not necessarily mark the end of the history of this South Caucasian tribe. In fact, whether they maintained a continued presence on the Black Sea steppe remains an open question. It is generally assumed today that they first appeared on the steppe at the beginning of the first millennium BCE.[12] Their area of settlement overlapped the

7 Chochorowski 1993, 11–12; Christian 1998, 133.
8 Chochorowski 1993, 11–12; Smirnow 1974, 34.
9 Chochorowski 1993, 13.
10 Chochorowski 1993, 13–14.
11 Chochorowski 1993, 14–15. Cf. Olbrycht 2000, 90–92; Chochorowski 2004, 92.
12 Chochorowski 1993, 14–15; J. Harmatta 1970, 7–8.

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territories later inhabited by the Scythians, i.e., the region situated between the Don, Lower Danube, and the Carpathian Mountains.[13] Important questions remain unanswered about the nature of their presence on these lands. Did the Cimmerians inhabit the northern Pontic Steppe or did they merely exert political control over this area? If we accept the latter view, it can be assumed that the Cimmerians were based at some point in the North Caucasus, which also explains their activity in West Asia. Some groups may have been forced by Scythian migration in the first half of the 7th century BCE to migrate to the Black Sea steppe, while others lived in isolated communities in the South Caucasus.[14]

The migration of the Scythians was probably part of a larger wave of ethnic displacements. We can infer this from the accounts of Herodotus, who writes in the mid-5th century BCE that the Arimaspoi, a people living in the far reaches of the *ecumene* known to the Greeks (beyond them lived griffins who guarded treasures of gold), attacked the Issedones and forced them from their homes, which led the latter to do the same to the Scythians, who then seized the lands of the Cimmerians.[15] However, Herodotus had earlier written that the cause of the Scythians' migration was the Massagetae, who drove them away from the Araxes River (Syr-Darya or Volga).[16] The contradiction here is reconciled by Henryk Łowmiański, who claims the Issedones were attacking the Scythians from the north, while the Massagetae blocked their path to the south.[17] In describing the struggle between these two peoples, Herodotus stated that during the Scythians' pursuit of the Cimmerians, the Scythians lost their way and marched along the northern and eastern ridge of the Caucasus into Media, where they defeated its inhabitants and gained control of West Asia. The Scythians' short rule (28 years) proved extremely harsh for the entire region. The Scythians plundered both Syria and Palestine, and one of their invasions even reached the borders of Egypt.[18] Some of the information from Herodotus' *Histories* appears to be worthy of trust. The Scythians were known in Assyrian and Babylonian sources as the Iškuzai/Ašguzi.[19] In addition, their presence

13 Chochorowski 1993, 10.
14 Chochorowski 1993, 14.
15 Hdt. IV 13 (pp. 212–215).
16 Hdt. IV 11 (pp. 210, 211).
17 Łowmiański 1975d, 104.
18 Hdt. I 15 (pp. 18. 19), 103–106 (pp. 132–139), 130 (pp. 168–171), IV 1 (pp. 198, 199).
19 Chochorowski 1993, 11; Łowmiański 1975d, 102; Melyukova 1990, 99, 435–440 (bibliography of the most important works); Christian 1998, 133–134.

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in West Asia and the Caucasus is confirmed by archaeological evidence.[20] However, it is questionable as to whether their expansion in this region can be explained by their pursuit of the Cimmerians. The latter, as we have seen above, appeared in the South Caucasus (Transcaucasia) several decades before the Scythians, and moreover, the period of the supposed Scythian domination of West Asia falls in the last quarter of the seventh century BCE,[21] when the Middle East was inhabited by rich and highly developed societies, whose wealth was likely to draw steppe-dwellers and their raids. The prospect of attaining such rich booty was sufficient motivation for the Scythians' expansion in the region. Their presence may therefore not have taken the form of permanent control over the region, but rather an extended period of looting expeditions.[22]

Scythian domination of the Black Sea steppe therefore begins in the mid-7th century BCE. Ethnically, the Scythians, like their predecessors, the Cimmerians, and their successors, the Sarmatians, were Iranian peoples.[23] Until the end of the 7th century BCE, these people played an important political role throughout West Asia. Their military presence in the region came to an end at the hands of Cyaxares, the king of the Medes.[24] The remnants of the Scythian army returned to the Black Sea steppe no later than the early 6th century BCE. Here, according to the accounts of Herodotus, the nomads had to fight their own rebellious slaves.[25] Perhaps this story, in which folk tale elements predominate, is a distant echo of some real uprising by the Scythians' subjects,[26] as the nomads had indeed subjugated numerous settled communities. This state of affairs appears to be confirmed most clearly by the ethnonyms of the Scythian tribes provided by Herodotus. These seem to indicate that the western part of 'Old Scythia' was inhabited by agricultural communities: Scythian-tillers, Scythian-farmers, the Alazones, and the Callippidae.[27] In the case of the

20 The long presence of the Scythians in the northern Caucasus is supposedly evidenced by their invasions in West Asia, which lasted throughout the 7th century BCE. Their contacts with the North Caucasus ended only in the fifth century. Murzin 1979, 20; Vinogradov 1972, 234; Il'inskaia, Terenozhkin, 1983, 14, 19, 33, 77; Harmatta 1990, 123–127; Makhortykh 1991, 102–111.

21 Harmatta 1990, 119–120; Chochorowski 1993, 11.

22 Ivantchik 1999, 497–520 (He questions the fact that the Scythians attained political dominance over West Asia, although he assumes their military presence in the region). Cf. Murzin 2005, 34.

23 Melyukova 1990, 99; Kretschmer 1921, 923–926.

24 Melyukova 1990, 100; Harmatta 1990, 119–120; Chochorowski 1993, 15.

25 Hdt. IV1 (pp. 198, 199), 3–4 (pp. 200–203).

26 Melyukova 1990, 100. Cf. Ivantchik (1999, 506).

27 Hdt. IV 17 (pp. 216–219).

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last two tribes, Herodotus adds that they were Hellenic Scythians, i.e., most probably closely integrated with the Greek population. Apart from the tribes mentioned above, the inhabitants of Scythia also included nomad Scythians and Royal Scythians. According to Herodotus, the latter group dominated, and considered the other Scythians to be their slaves.[28] From Royal Scythians most likely arose a triad of rulers who led all Scythian ethnos. A political organism of this type was credited with withstanding an invasion by Darius, the ruler of Persia, in ca. 513–512 BCE.[29]

During the period of their domination on the Pontic steppe, the Scythians most likely maintained good contacts with the Greeks. This does not mean, however, that there were no tensions between the two sides.[30] In general, however, the nomads' interest in trade with the Greek colonies on the Black Sea and Sea of Azov in all certainly required them to keep their bellicosity in check.[31] From the Scythians, the Hellenes mainly purchased grain, for which there was a great demand in Greece. Another object of trade were Scythian slaves, whose presence in cities such as Athens is confirmed extensively in Greek literature of the classical era (5th–4th century BCE).[32] It cannot be ruled out that the Hellenes also purchased traditional nomadic products (milk, animal skins, horses, cattle, etc.).[33] Among the Scythians, and among many other nomadic peoples, luxury goods produced in Greek craftsmen's workshops were highly prized. Judging by the content of the graves of the Scythian aristocracy, articles produced by Greek goldsmiths were particularly popular.[34] The Steppe-dwellers also took advantage of the fact that an important trade route

28 Hdt. IV 19–20 (pp. 218–221).

29 Hdt. IV 1 (p. 198, 199), 83–93 (p. 284–295); 97–98 (p. 298–301); 118–142 (p. 316–343). Many researchers share the opinion that this expedition is a historic fact: Smirnow 1974, 102–105; Melyukova 1990, 101; Christian 1998, 135. However, since the end of the 19th century there have been a number of critical voices: Bury 1897; Harmatta 1990, 128–129; Łowmiański 1963, 121–122; Nenci 1958, 147; How, Wells 1912, 430–433; Hartog 1988, 191–226; Asheri, Lloyd, Corcella 2007, 573–574, 649–650, 661–669.

30 What is particularly interesting is the rather positive, though not idealized image of the Scythians in Herodotus. This may have been a consequence of his perspective as a historian from Halicarnassus and of his focus on describing events in world history. In the everlasting war between East and West, the Scythians, as enemies of the Persians, like the Greeks, belonged to the latter faction. And from within such a broad perspective of history, smaller conflicts were probably not mentioned. Cf. Paroń 2012, 79. The existence of short-lived tensions in relations between the inhabitants of the steppe and the Greeks seems, however, almost certain. Vinogradov 2008, 15.

31 On Greek-Scythian economic relations: Christian 1998, 152–155.

32 Jacob 1928, 53–78; Hall 1989, 138–139.

33 Melyukova 1990, 105.

34 Kubczak 1978, 76–125, 140; Melyukova 1990, 105.

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connecting the Black Sea coast with Inner Asia ran through their territory. The Scythians benefited greatly from the trade in goods. Archaeological sources indicate that the nomadic aristocracy was most affluent in the 4th century BCE. This was the period to which the most opulent and most numerous archaeological finds attributed to the Scythians are dated.[35]

Both constant contact with Greek culture and the influx of great wealth must have brought significant changes to the socio-cultural and political life of the steppe-dwellers. The strong influence of Hellenistic culture in the 6th and 5th century BCE is confirmed by Herodotus.[36] Relatively early on, there was a fascination with Greek culture among Scythian elites. More widespread cultural change is noticeable among the Scythians at the end of the 5th century BCE, when an intensifying process of sedentarization can be observed among some nomadic groups. They settled mainly in eastern Crimea and the Taman peninsula, later on the Lower Dnieper, at the mouth of the Dniester, and finally (from the 4th to the early 3rd century BCE) in the Don Delta.[37] Despite these changes, nomads still dominated in terms of numbers. Their expansion even reached the forest steppe zone, as demonstrated by barrows discovered in the Kiev region dating back to the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.[38]

According to many scholars, manifestations of power, expressed mainly through the consumption of luxury goods and special funeral rites (in particular, barrows from the 4th century BCE) testify to the Scythians' creation of state structures.[39] Greek and Latin sources credit the Scythian king Atheas with creating this steppe empire, which stretched from the Don to the Lower Danube.[40] However, in 339 BCE he was killed at the age of 90 in a battle with the Macedonian King Philip II, who took as spoils 20,000 captives (women and children) and enormous herds of cattle and horses. This battle took place in the Lower Danube region.[41] This fact, along with the nature of the spoils that fell to Philip, is said by some scholars to prove that the Scythians were

35 Khazanov 1975, 240; 1978b, 429; Melyukova 1990, 101, 105; Murzin 2005, 34–35; Olbrycht 2000a, 109.

36 Hdt. IV 76, 78–80 (pp. 274–283). The stories of Anacharsis and the Scythian King Skyles, who died at the hands of their own brothers for their cultural apostasy.

37 Khazanov 1975, 239; Melyukova 1990, 104; Christian 1998, 155.

38 Khazanov 1975, 240; Kubczak 1978, 107–125; Melyukova 1990, 104.

39 Khazanov 1975, 218f.; 1978b, 427 (According to Khazanov, the so-called First Scythian State had already been established during the period of the alleged domination of nomads over West Asia. The Second Scythian State was created on the Black Sea steppe); Melyukova 1990, 105; Smirnow 1974, 109; Christian 1998, 149–152.

40 Khazanov 1975, 238–246; 1978b, 429.

41 Ius.-Trog. IX 2 (pp. 60–61); Strabo VII 3.18 (p. 226). Cf. Khazanov 1975, 245; Christian 1998, 136; Murzin 2005, 38.

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then in retreat from the Sarmatians, who were attacking them from the east.[42] This leads to the question: Did the death of Atheas lead to the breakup of the Scythian state? Those researchers who believe that his death did not lead to its sudden fall would appear to be correct. The fact that the Scythians later defeated Zopyrion, one of Alexander the Great's commanders, in the Siege of Olbia, testifies to their still considerable strength.[43] Yet the Scythians' military activity in the Lower Danube area does indeed raise questions. In 313 BCE, they invaded the lands south of the Ister, but were beaten back.[44] Not long afterward (309 BCE), they were engaged in fighting in the Bosporan Kingdom.[45] Both of these areas were very close to the territories over which the Scythians continued to maintain control. It thus seems that the final disintegration of the Scythian empire on the Black Sea steppe can be tentatively dated to the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. The cause of its demise – simultaneous pressures from Thracian and Celtic tribes to the west, and the Sarmatians to the east.[46]

Following the fall of Great Scythia, in its place there arose two new political organisms, known collectively as the Lesser Scythias. The first was created in the area of modern-day Dobrudja by a group of Scythians who settled on the right bank of the Danube and remained there until the 1st century BCE.[47] The second inhabited the mountainous and steppe regions of Crimea. During its height, its rulers also controlled the lands of the Lower Boh and Dnieper. This time of prosperity falls in the latter half of the 2nd century BCE, when the Lesser Scythia in Crimea was ruled by Skilurus. The Greek colonies recognized his sovereignty, a fact reflected in their minting of coins bearing the Scythian ruler's likeness. Skilurus held control over all of north-west Crimea. The main source of his vast wealth was trade, which was now being carried on without the Greek cities acting as intermediaries. During the reign of Palacus, the son and successor of Skilurus, Crimean Scythia declined in importance. This was mainly due to the intervention of Mithridates VI Eupator, King of Pontus. His involvement in this region was welcomed by the Black Sea Greeks, who hoped to free themselves from the burdensome tutelage of the Scythians. An invasion led by one of Mithridates' military commanders, Diophantus, brought about the final defeat of Scythians and ended their control of the Greek colonies, although the Scythian kingdom in Crimea survived until the invasion of

42 Harmatta 1970, 16.
43 Ius.-Trog. XII 1 (p. 78). Cf. Harmatta 1970, 17; Melyukova 1990, 106.
44 Diod. XIX 73.4 (pp. 35, 36). Cf. Olbrycht 2000a, 118.
45 Diod. XX 24 (pp. 206–207).
46 Khazanov 1975, 245–6; Melyukova 1990, 107; Olbrycht 2000a, 118.
47 Khazanov 1975, 247–8; Melyukova 1990, 107.

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the Goths, i.e., until ca. 230. The final disappearance of the Taurian Scythians occurred during the Migration Period (*Völkerwanderung*).[48]

The abandonment by many nomads of the natural environment of the steppe resulted over time in changes in their lifestyle and means of support. In their late period (2nd century BCE–3rd century CE), the Scythians became a settled people. Their rulers did, however, make efforts to maintain their old traditions, traces of which can be found in the royal burial sites discovered in Scythian Neapolis.[49]

The Sarmatians became the political heirs of the Scythians. A series of events at the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE began a period of domination of the Black Sea steppe by this new group of Iranian tribes. Unlike the Scythians, the group described by ancient authors as the Sauromatians or Sarmatians was not a homogeneous political organism, but rather a collection of tribes that migrated into the area in successive waves. From a cultural point of view, these tribes can be regarded as homogeneous in the context of their nomadic lifestyle; there were, however, significant differences among them.[50] The Sarmatians, like the Scythians, are considered by some scholars to be descendants of the so-called 'Timber-grave' (Srubnaia) culture of the late Bronze Age.[51] These researchers also tend to share the conviction that these two peoples were closely related. Such a view was expressed in ancient times, beginning with Herodotus. He cited a legend according to which the Sauromatians were said to be descendants of Scythian men and conquered Amazons whom they had pardoned.[52] Their language was also close to Scythian, being an 'impure' form of it, because the Amazon wives of the young Scythians never managed to learn to speak the language of their husbands well.[53] Their joining forces to repel Darius' invasion also points to friendly contacts existing between the Sarmatians and Scythians.[54]

However, some doubts are raised by the differences in the names used to refer to these people. In the case of older authors (Herodotus, Hippocrates) they appear under the name Sauromatians (Σαυρομάται). We hear about the Sarmatians (Σαρμάται) for the first time in the writings of the Greek historian

48 Khazanov 1975, 248–251; Melyukova 1990, 107–108; Smirnow 1974, 113–119; Harmatta 1970, 20–21, 23–24.
49 Melyukova 1990, 109–110.
50 Sulimirski 1970, 22–25; Christian 1998, 136–137.
51 Melyukova 1990, 99.
52 Hdt. IV 110–116 (pp. 308–317).
53 Hdt. IV 117 (pp. 316, 317).
54 Hdt. IV 119 (pp. 318, 319).

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Polybius, in his accounts of events dating back to 179 BCE.[55] Later writers (Strabo) use both ethnonyms interchangeably or have a very vague idea of the relationship between them (Pliny the Elder).[56] Thus, the question arises as to whether we are dealing with two, perhaps related, but nevertheless separate ethnic groups. The majority of modern researchers favour the recognition of both names as lections of the same ethnonym. The main argument for this is the names given to the Alani, which in Ptolemy's work has been preserved as Alaunoi (Ἀλαῦνοι).[57] The older ethnonym continued to be used in archaeology only as a conventional device for separating the early stage of the development of Sarmatian culture (the Sauromatic period, 7th–4th century BCE) from later phases.[58]

Some researchers, however, go further, distinguishing two spheres of culture 'provisionally labelled Sarmatian'.[59] The first encompassed the area between the Don and Volga, while the second area lay between Samara and the Ural mountains. The Don-Volga region is said to correspond to the nomadic settlement area of Herodotus' Sauromatians, whose relations with the Scythians were generally good. For this reason, when Sauromatian tribal groups began moving west of the Don in the late 5th century BCE and settled in the area of the Maeotis,[60] this migration did not cause a deterioration in the relations between these two peoples.[61] Such a state of peace lasted until the expansion of the Samaran-Ural group, who, according to some researchers, comprised the bulk of the Sarmatians.[62] Around the 4th–3rd century BCE, a portion of the population of the southern Urals moved to the Lower Volga Region, conquering the Sauromatians living here. As a result, new 'Sarmatian' tribal groups formed, which in the 3rd century BCE then began an invasion of the Black Sea steppe.[63] These observations appear to be confirmed by information supplied by Diodorus Siculus, a writer from the 1st century BCE, who claimed that the Sauromatians came to Europe from Media and settled to the east of the Maeotis and the Don.[64] As the years passed, he says, their numbers grew (*auksethentas* – the use of this phrase may indicate that the population

55 Polyb. XXV 2.13 (p. 176). Cf. Łowmiański 1975b, 56; Harmatta 1970, 17–18, 43.
56 Plinius IV 80 (p. 178), VI 16 (p. 348), VI 19 (p. 350). Cf. Łowmiański 1975b, 56.
57 Łowmiański 1975b, 56.
58 Łowmiański 1975b, 56.
59 Melyukova 1990, 110.
60 Hippocr. XVII (p. 116). Cf. previous chapter.
61 Melyukova 1990, 111.
62 Melyukova 1990, 112.
63 Melyukova 1990, 112.
64 Diod. II 43.6 (pp. 28, 29).

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increased as a result of migration) and they ravaged large part of Scythia and turned most of the land into a desert.[65] Some scholars have argued that archaeological data does not indicate that a direct link existed between the Sauromatians and the Sarmatians in the 3rd century BCE.[66] In light of such claims, it seems necessary to establish the exact relationship between these two ethnonyms. Even if the two peoples were closely related, this does not mean they should be identified as a single group.

Due to the scarcity and fragmentary nature of available sources, this chronology of Sarmatian-Scythian conflicts is somewhat speculative. Some researchers have expressed their conviction that the first clashes between these two peoples occurred as early as the 4th century BCE. The above-mentioned actions of the Scythian king Atheas in the Lower Danube region were prompted by his loss of the eastern Black Sea steppe to the Sarmatians. His efforts were an attempt to compensate for the territories his people had lost and to acquire new lands from which to continue to defend themselves against incursions by the Sarmatians.[67] However, the failure of Zopyrion's attack, as well as the rich artefacts found in Scythian burial mounds, most often dating back to the 4th century BCE, seem to indicate that in the last decades of that century the Scythian state still possessed considerable vitality. Its fall probably did not occur until the next century and, as noted above, was not brought about solely by the Sarmatians. The Scythians' migration was also a result of changes in the policies of the new Hellenic rulers of Iran towards steppe-dwellers in Central Asia at the end of the 4th century BCE.[68] A series of nomadic invasions and subsequent retaliatory expeditions by the Seleucides are believed to have triggered ethnic displacements which led the Sarmatians to resettle in the North Caucasus area. The first mentions of their inhabiting the Black Sea steppe date back to the 3rd century BCE. Valuable information is found in the so-called "Decree of Protogenes", an epigraphic source from Olbia. We learn from it that the inhabitants of the Greek colony were forced to pay tribute to Saitaphernes, ruler of the Saioi, usually identified with the Royal Sarmatians

65 Diod. II 43.7 (pp. 28, 29): τούτους [Sauromatians – A.P.] δ' ὕστερον πολλοῖς ἔτεσιν αὐξηθέντας πορθῆσαι πολλὴν τῆς Σκυθίας, και τοὺς καταπολεμηθέντας ἄρδην ἀναιροῦντας ἔρημον ποιῆσαι τὸ πλεῖστον μέρος τῆς χώρας. Cf. Olbrycht 2000a, 110–114.

66 Melyukova 1990, 112.

67 Harmatta 1941, 52; 1970, 16; Sulimirski 1970, 101 (He claims that Atheas was not the ruler of all the Scythians, but only of the western elements that took refuge in Dobrudja).

68 Olbrycht 1979, 44; 2000a 118–119.

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described by Strabo. He mentions two other new peoples, considered by scholars to be Sarmatians: the Thyssamatae and Saudarmatae.[69]

In the 2nd century BCE, the Sarmatians were a significant force on the Black Sea steppe. This is evidenced by references to the Sarmatian king Gatalos in a peace treaty signed in 179 BCE by Farnaces, King of Pontus,[70] as well as an appeal by the Sarmatian queen Amage (ca. 165–140 BCE) to the Crimean Scythians to halt their attacks on Greek cities.[71] All of these facts indicate that in the 3rd and 2nd century BCE a strong tribal confederation, led by the Royal Sarmatians, dominated the Black Sea steppe. This included the Iazyges, who lived along its western frontier, the Urgi, and the Roxolani, who inhabited the area between the Dnieper and the Don.[72] This tribal confederation's control extended over the Black Sea steppe from the Danube to the Don. The Greek Pontic cities also fell under its authority for a time, until Mithridates VI Eupator, King of Pontus wrested control of them from the Sarmatians. This was followed by an agreement that led to a kind of political equilibrium. This alliance allowed the Sarmatians to begin expanding their political control over the Lower Danube area, where for a time they ruled over the Triballi.[73]

The death of Mithridates VI (63 BCE) and the disintegration of the Sarmatian confederation (ca. 61 BCE) led to the collapse of this political order. Greek Pontic cities came under Roman rule, while in the western part of the Black Sea steppe, the Dacians, headed by King Burebista, continued their expansion into the area. In ca. 50 BCE Burebista conquered and methodically weakened Olbia, which never regained its former glory.[74] However, the changes described here did not signal the definitive fall of the Sarmatians, though some tribes did indeed disappear from history; this is especially true of the so-called Royal Sarmatians. Moreover, no supra-tribal Sarmatian political power would ever again come into being. The Iazyges and Roxolani, however, survived this period of weakness and re-established themselves around the close of the century. The first group resettled on the Lower Danube, and their attacks in this region are mentioned by Ovid (early 1st century).[75] Soon, however, the Iazyges migrated

69 IOSPE I 32 (pp. 43–56). Cf. Harmatta 1970, 10–12; Łowmiański 1975b, 57; Sulimirski 1970, 131–132; Olbrycht 2000a, 120; 2004, 333.

70 Polyb. XXV 2.13 (p. 176). Cf. Harmatta 1970, 19; Sulimirski 1970, 132–133; Olbrycht 2000a, 121; 2004, 334.

71 Harmatta 1970, 16–17; Sulimirski 1970, 135. Other researchers date Amage's intervention earlier, to 3rd century BCE: Rostovtzeff 1931, 16; Olbrycht 2000a, 120; 2004, 333.

72 Strabo VII 3.17 (pp. 220–222).

73 Harmatta 1970, 12–34, 39–40; Olbrycht 2004, 337–340.

74 Harmatta 1970, 29–31; Sulimirski 1970, 133–134.

75 Harmatta 1970, 41; Sulimirski 1970,134; Melyukova 1990, 113.

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onto the Hungarian Plain. Their path probably ran south through Oltenia and Banat.[76] The Iazyges were persuaded to relocate their settlements by Roman diplomats, who used them to create a buffer zone between the territories of the empire and the warlike Dacians.[77] A no less important reason for this shift, however, was the ethnic displacements taking place on the Caspian steppe in the early 1st century. Acting as a rearguard for the Sarmatians were the Alani, who subjugated two Sarmatian tribes living between the Volga and the Don: the Aorsoi and the Siraces.[78] The Roxolani, in turn, under pressure from the Siraces, filled the space left by the departure of the Iazyges.[79] The most active group in the 1st century, however, was the Alani, who terrorized the South Caucasus (Transcaucasia) and West Asia with their invasions. In 68 CE their presence was also affirmed on the steppe of the northern Azov region.[80] The Roxolani, who attacked the Danube provinces of the Roman Empire, were also highly active.[81] In the late 2nd century, they began to leave the Black Sea steppe, and migrated in a series of waves to the Hungarian Lowlands, where they brought the Iazyges under their control. The migration of the last Roxolani groups was probably accelerated by the arrival on the Pontic steppe of the Goths.[82] This event marked the end of the Sarmatians' political domination in the western areas of this steppe. The eastern part (to the east of the Don) remained in the hands of the Alani, whose rule there ended with the arrival of the Huns.[83] Some independent Alani groups remained in the Caucasus,[84] while others travelled west to reach Gaul and Spain during the Great Migration,[85] while still others chose to become subjects of the Huns.[86]

76 Harmatta 1970, 41.

77 Harmatta 1970, 42.

78 Harmatta 1970, 42; Sulimirski 1970, 142. The much more powerful Aorsi are sometimes associated with the An-ts'ai/Yen-ts'ai people, known to Chinese sources. Olbrycht 1998, 135; 2000a, 125. Another view is represented by K. Czeglédy (1983, 50–51, 53), who identifies Yen-ts'ai with the Alani and believes that they originally belonged to the Aorsi federation, which controlled vast steppe areas from the Don to the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. After the fall of the Aorsi (around 50 CE), the Alani assumed control of the federation.

79 Harmatta 1970, 48–49; Sulimirski 1970, 137, 139.

80 Harmatta 1970, 48–49 (The Alani did not reach the Danube in the 2nd century CE). Sulimirski 1970, 142–143; Melyukova 1990, 113; Olbrycht 2000a, 126–128.

81 Sulimirski 1970, 137.

82 Harmatta 1970, 45–49; Sulimirski 1970, 167–168.

83 Sulimirski 1970, 162; Melyukova 1990, 113.

84 Sulimirski 1970,198–201; Melyukova 1990, 113.

85 Sulimirski 1970, 186–188.

86 Sulimirski 1970, 188–194.

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The Sarmatians, although related to the Scythians, never reached their level of development. Some researchers believe that they also failed to create their own state.[87] Thanks to their control of the Black Sea steppe, Sarmatian tribal unions were able to develop trade relations with Greek cities on the coast of the Pontos, as well as with West Asia (mainly with Parthia).[88] In the 1st century we can see a marked influx of Sarmatian immigrants from all social strata, including the aristocracy, into the cities on the northern coast of the Black Sea.[89] The Sarmatians also actively participated in the political life of the Bosporan kingdom, founded at the beginning of the 5th century BCE, backing a succession of candidates to the throne.[90] The Sarmatians possessed strong cultural formation skills, as testified by their role in the development of the Cherniakhov and Saltovo-Maiaki cultures.[91]

2.2 Gothic Episode

As noted above, the 3rd century brought sweeping changes to the Black Sea steppe, as the political domination of Iranian nomadic groups in the region came to an end. The expansion of their successors, the Goths, into the area came from an unusual and thus surprising direction: the northwest. According to Jordanes, who wrote in the mid-6th century, they migrated from the legendary island of Skandza,[92] which he called a "hive of races" and a "womb of nations".[93] They were ruled by King Berig, who settled with his people in a region known as *Gothiscandza*.[94] According to some researchers who generally accept Jordanes' account, this region was located at the mouth of the Oder River.[95] At some point, the Goths began a march through Pomerania toward the lower Vistula River, where Germanic settlement consolidated and stabilized.[96] Their settlement of this area was supposedly noted by Claudius Ptolemy, who stated that the area south of the Vistula Veneti, on the right bank

87 Melyukova 1990, 116. For another opinion: Iatsenko 1993, 83–88; 2003, 88–99 (in terms of social and cultural development, the Sarmatians were almost equal to the Scythians).
88 Harmatta 1970, 34–39; Olbrycht 1998, 221–231.
89 Melyukova 1990, 115–116.
90 Sulimirski 1970, 123.
91 Sulimirski 1970, 170, 201–202.
92 'Insula magna, nomine *Skandza*'. Iord. 16 (p. 58).
93 '[…] Skandza insula quasi officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum […]'. Iord. 25 (p. 60).
94 Iord. 25–26 (p. 60).
95 Strzelczyk 1984, 66; Kokowski 2008, 26–36.
96 Strzelczyk 1984, 66–67.

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of the lower Vistula, was the seat of the Gythones,[97] whom most scholars identify as Goths. Material traces of their presence in this region includes sites of Wielbark culture.[98]

However, during the reign of King Filimer, the fifth successor to Bering, the decision was made to leave the ethnos' current area of settlement. According to Jordanes, this was due to overcrowding among the Goths.[99] When Filimer reached Scythia, he established his rule over a land known as *Oium*,[100] the name of which has been translated as 'meadow' or 'pasture' (German *Aue*).[101] Archaeological data indicate that during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, a close-knit group of peoples, distinct from those around them, migrated over time from the region of eastern Pomerania through Mazovia, Podolia, Volhynia and Ukraine towards the Black Sea.[102] This migration is usually identified with what Jordanes called "the march of the Goths".[103] However, the course of this journey was longer and more complicated than he imagined, and most likely spanned the reign of more than a single ruler.

Once the Goths reached the Black Sea steppe, they came into contact with the Sarmatian tribes who were the dominant force in the region. The Goth's territorial ambitions in *Oium* inevitably led to clashes with those living there. Scattered references to these battles are found in traditional sources. Jordanes states, for example, that the Goths first defeated the Spali (this is implied by the logic of his narrative), and then marched victoriously, occupying all of Scythia, until they reached the Pontic Sea.[104] In reality, however, the course of events was certainly not as clear-cut as Jordanes claims. It is difficult to state with certainty when the first Goths reached the Black Sea steppe, when their migration into the area ended, or how these newcomers conquered and ruled over these lands. The *terminus ante quem* for their arrival is usually given as the date of the first Gothic invasion of the Roman Empire, i.e., the attack on Histria (Istros) at the mouth of the Danube in 238 CE. The Goths made this attack with the support of the Carpi, a Dacian people with whom they had formed a loose alliance. The Carpi withdrew their forces, however, after the Romans agreed

97 Kl.Ptol. III 5.20 (p. 304).
98 Strzelczyk 1984 66; Wolfram 1990, 50; Kokowski 2008, 39–67.
99 Iord. 26 (p. 60).
100 Iordanes, 27 (p. 60).
101 Zwolski 1984, 95; Łowmiański 1963, 261; Wolfram 1990, 52.
102 Strzelczyk 1984, 64; Heather 1996, 35–39.
103 Strzelczyk 1984, 66; Kokowski 2008, 71–97, 159–174.
104 Iord. 28 (pp. 60–61).

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to pay them an annual tribute, leaving their discontented allies alone on the battlefield.[105]

There are no reports of further military activity by the Goths in the northern *limes* of the empire over the course of the next decade. The first group of Goths arrived in Scythia before 238 CE.[106] It can logically be assumed that additional Gothic groups migrated to the Black Sea steppe over the course of the decade separating the two previously-mentioned attacks on Rome.[107] During this period, the Goths completed their conquest of the region. The Greek colonies on the Black Sea coast (Tyras, Tanais) apparently held off their attacks somewhat longer, because they first began to serve as sea bases for further invasions only after ca. 250 CE.[108] It is difficult to say which of the Sarmatian tribes were the first to be conquered by the Goths, and how seriously to treat Jordanes' references to the Spali. The existence of such an ethnos is confirmed by Pliny the Elder, who wrote in the 1st century CE, but he places them on the banks of the Maeotis.[109] There is no way of knowing for certain whether they had still occupied settlements in the area in the first half of the 3rd century CE.[110] However, if this were the case, it would mean that the Goths began the conquest of their future homeland from its eastern edge, which is hard to imagine. It is also unclear why the Gothic tradition distinguishes this particular group,[111] as it is very likely that all of the lands east of the Danube and west of the Maeotis and the Don were under the control of Gothic tribes.

Having imposed their rule on the peoples of Scythia, and most likely bolstered by waves of Germanic migration, the Goths resumed their attacks on the Roman Empire. Up until the mid-3rd century, their main area of penetration was the Danube provinces,[112] but in the latter half of the century, a wave of Gothic invasions was aimed at securing lands along the Black Sea coast. These incursions were probably launched from port-towns of the former Bosporan Kingdom. Control of these ports, along with an alliance with

105 Łowmiański 1963, 264; Strzelczyk 1984, 59, 88; Kotula 1994, 71–72; Wolfram 1990, 54; Heather 1996, 40, 47.

106 Strzelczyk 1984, 87; Kotula 1994, 71. Goths' incursions may have led to an earlier crisis and the fall of Olbia during the reign of Severus Alexander (222–235 CE).

107 Łowmiański 1963, 264.

108 Strzelczyk 1984, 87, 90; Wolfram 1990, 58–59; Kotula 1994, 77.

109 Plinius VI 22 (p. 352).

110 Some researchers tended to locate the Spali to the west of the Don (Łowmiański 1963, 260), or between the Don and the middle Dnieper (Sulimirski 1970, 163).

111 Herwig Wolfram (1990, 53) states that their name in Slavic means 'giants', which is a common term for outsiders.

112 Strzelczyk 1984, 88–90; Wolfram 1990, 54–58; Heather 1996, 40.

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the local population (the Borani tribe, based along the coast of the Maeotis, was noted to have taken part in one of the first invasions) allowed the Goths to transport their forces and launch attacks by sea.[113] Their invasions reached ever more distant shores on the Black Sea. After an initial unsuccessful attack on the city of Pithyus (255 CE) in the western Caucasus, a succession of attacks gradually penetrated ever further along the eastern and southern shores of the Pontos Euxeinos (Black Sea), ultimately reaching the waters of the Propontis (today's Sea of Marmara). The next target of the Goths' attacks were cities of Bithynia (257 CE).[114] Fierce attacks by the Goths and other allied peoples continued between 260 and 269. In 267, the Herules (*Heruli*), perhaps assisted by the Goths, crossed the Propontis and sailed with a fleet of 500 ships into the Aegean Sea to attack Greece. Athens, Sparta, Argos, Corinth and Olympia were all taken and plundered.[115] However, an unsuccessful invasion in 269 and further military defeats at the hands of Rome[116] led to a sharp decline in attacks by Goths on the cities of the Mediterranean world. The year 270 marked a reversal of the Goths' fortunes. They were defeated by the forces of Claudius Gothicus and his successor Aurelian. This marked the beginning of a period of peace on the empire's Danube border that lasted for a century with only intermittent interruptions. Some scholars are inclined to assume that the conciliatory attitude of the Goths at this time was also due to upheavals taking place within the ethnos itself. According to Herwig Wolfram, a combination of events, including defeats in battles with the Romans and the evacuation of Roman Dacia ordered by Aurelian, severely tested the unity of the Goths and accelerated the process of their splitting into the Visigoths (Tervingi) and Ostrogoths (Greuthungi).[117] There were already two distinct Gothic sub-groups in the year 291, when the Romans first noted the existence of two Gothic ethne.[118] The Ostrogoths, the dominant group of the two, were credited with defeating the Alani and Urugundi on the Don basin. As inhabitants of the Black Sea steppe, the Ostrogoths are also the group of primary interest to us, though the history of this people, who lived farther away from the borders of the Roman Empire,

113 Strzelczyk 1984, 90–91; Wolfram 1990, 58–59; Kokowski 2008, 165–166.

114 Strzelczyk 1984, 90–91; Wolfram 1990, 59–61; Heather 1996, 40–41.

115 Strzelczyk 1984, 92; Wolfram 1990, 62–63; Heather 1996, 41. The last two authors date this expedition to the spring of 268. Cf. Kotula 1994, 79–85.

116 Still in 268, the Goths suffered a significant defeat in the Battle at the Nessos River (on the border of Thrace and Macedonia). The following year, they suffered a devastating defeat to Claudius II Gothicus on the Naissus (today the Niš). Kotula 1994, 85–112; Strzelczyk 1984, 92–94; Wolfram 1990, 64–65; Heather 1996, 41.

117 Wolfram 1990, 65–66. Cf. Strzelczyk 1984, 94–95.

118 Strzelczyk 1984, 95; Wolfram 1990, 67.

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is less well known than that of the Visigoths. We know for certain that power within the group was held by the Amali royal family. They created what Herwig Wolfram describes as a military kingdom, unlike the Visigoths, among whom power rested with an aristocratic oligarchy.[119]

The Goths' conquest of the Black Sea steppe brought the region's ethnically diverse population under their rule; they thereby replaced Iranian nomadic groups – i.e., Sarmatian and Sarmato-Scythian tribes – as the dominant force on the steppe.[120] A political system headed by the Amal clan was created in the area controlled by the Greuthungi. It was physically manifested in the rise of Cherniakhov culture, a highly developed culture that was dominant throughout the steppe and forest steppe regions, and extended in some places to forested areas. The peoples living within its borders supported themselves primarily from farming and cattle breeding. Its artisans produced high-quality handicrafts, including metalwork in both iron and non-ferrous metals, and specialized in the production of pottery and glass. It should be noted that despite the Goths' political dominance, Iranian groups played a significant role in the formation of the Cherniakhov culture, as did Geto-Dacian in its western extremes.[121] A process of 'Scythianization' can even be seen among the Greuthungi, especially in spheres related to the art of war. Following the example of the Sarmatians, the Ostrogoths are said to have created mounted units armed with lances and swords.[122] These forces could cover large distances easily, which helped the Amali to maintain order among the peoples under their rule. In addition to its steppe elements, the influences of provincial Roman settlements are also clearly visible in Cherniakhov culture.[123] These cultural influences, especially those of the peoples living within the Ostrogothic Kingdom, were conducive to the formation of a distinct ethnic amalgam. The material benefits derived from incursions against the Roman Empire and the peoples of the northern Black Sea steppe further strengthened this process. The invasion of the Huns can thus be seen as interrupting the formation of a new ethnic culture.[124]

This Goth-dominated political structure's period of greatest splendour came under Ermanaric (*Ermanaricus*), 'the noblest of the Amali',[125] whose reign

119 Strzelczyk 1984, 68; Wolfram 1990, 95, 123.
120 Szymański 1973, 27; Sulimirski 1970, 170.
121 Szymański 1973, 26–27; Sulimirski 1970, 170; Magomedov 2001, 113–132; Kokowski 2008, 199–217.
122 Wolfram 1990, 123; Kotula 1994, 68.
123 Szymański 1973, 27; Kokowski 2008, 199f.
124 Strzelczyk 1984, 61; Magomedov 2001, 140–147.
125 'Hermanaricus nobilissimus Amalorum'. Iord, 116 (p. 88).

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dates back to the mid-4th century.[126] According to Ammianus Marcellinus, Ermanaric was 'dreaded by the neighbouring nations because of his many and varied deeds of valour'.[127] Additional information comes from Jordanes, who claimed that through his conquests he came to rule all the peoples of Germania and Scythia.[128] He says the first victims of his conquests were 13 ethne: *the Golthescytha, Thiudos, Inaunxis, Vasinabroncae, Merens, Mordens, Imniscaris, Rogas, Tadzans, Athaul, Navego, Bubegenas, Coldas*.[129] The identification of these groups remains under discussion today. The first two peoples are usually mentioned in combination and described as: 'the golden peoples of the Urals', with the suffix *scytha-* being considered a gloss by a later copyist.[130] Somewhere in this vicinity lived the *Imniscaris*. The *Vasinabroncae* were the 'inhabitants of a flat country with lush grass, rich waters and swamps'. The next two ethnonyms probably refer to the Mari and Mordvins, Finno-Ugric tribes that inhabited the Volga region in the Middle Ages. The *Imniscaris* (In Old Rus' *Mescera* means 'beekeepers') belonged to the same ethnic group. The next two names, when merged, give **Roastadjans*, i.e., 'inhabitants of the Volga coast'. This was most likely a group living on the river's left bank, opposite the Mordvins.[131] There remains uncertainty as to the identity of the last four ethnonyms.[132] Later victims of Ermanaric's expansion included the Herules, who lived on the Maeotis; the Venedas, a large but not particularly warlike Slavic group; and finally the Aests (Aesti), who inhabited the coast of the Germanic Ocean (Baltic Sea).[133] The military successes described by Jordanes indicate that the lands under the rule of the Ostrogoth king stretched across the European continent from the Black Sea in the south to the Baltic Sea in the north, and from the Dniester and Vistula Rivers in the west to the Oka, Volga

126 Szymański 1973, 27; Strzelczyk 1984, 68; Magomedov 2001, 141–143.

127 Amm.Marc. XXXI 3.1 (pp. 394, 396).

128 '[…] idem ipse prudentia et virtute subregit omnibusque Scythiae et Germaniae nationibus ac si propriis lavoribus imperavit'. Iord. 120 (p. 89).

129 Iord. 116–117 (p. 88).

130 Wolfram 1990, 96. Other possible interpretations are offered by Jerzy Strzelczyk (1984, 70). The Golthescytha were hypothesized to be the Goliad', a Baltic people who lived on the upper Oka in the early Middle Ages. The Thiudos were supposed to a term for the Chud, an ancient Rus' name for Finnish tribes.

131 Strzelczyk 1984, 69, 71; Wolfram 1990, 96.

132 The Finnish scholar Jooseppi Mikkola has suggested that peoples from the Rogas to the end of Jordanes' list should be located on the foothills of the Caucasus. His reasoning was based on an old Armenian geography by Movses Khorenatsi (8th century). Mikkola also suggests (probably correctly) that Ermanaric conquered well-developed areas (*Kulturgegenden*), which were located along major trade routes. Mikkola 1922, 56–66; Łowmiański 1963, 399–400 (critical on Mikkola's findings); Strzelczyk 1984, 71.

133 Iord. 117–120 (p. 88–89).

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River basin and Urals in the east. It is hard to believe that Ermanaric was able to create such a vast, unified political organization. Some of the ethne under his rule inhabited lands two thousand kilometers from the Goths' core settlements. Scholars have justifiably concluded that Ermanaric's 'empire' can be divided into two parts. The first was a core area, limited to the lands inhabited by people of the Cherniakhov culture. The second consisted of lands under the Amali king's protectorate.[134] These lands included important trade routes used since early antiquity as a link between the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea region and Central Asia, which in part explains the Ostrogoths' motives for seeking to control them.[135] The political system created by 'the noblest of the Amali' resembled the *Pax Chazarica* four centuries later,[136] which had at its centre a strong and well-organized state (the Khazar Khaganate), to which numerous tribes pledged their allegiance. One of the reasons that this Khazar 'empire' was established was to protect and control the key trade routes that ran along the Volga River. This both provided the Khazars with guaranteed revenue from trade and allowed them to develop a rational, organized system for exploiting the resources of the region's inhabitants. It cannot be ruled out that Ermanaric, was also interested in moving beyond plundering and securing a steady source of income from trade. However, the political system he created covered an area much larger than that of the Khazars. Its vast scale is confirmed by the active contacts maintained between the Black Sea Goths and the peoples living within the Baltic Sea zone[137] and in the Mediterranean area. The relatively long presence of the Ostrogoths on the Black Sea steppe provided them with a good understanding of the region's political and economic importance and its links with the interior of the continent. In addition, defeats in battles with Rome in the late 260s and early 270s and the subsequent disintegration of a unified Gothic political structure ultimately determined the direction of the Greuthungi expansion. While Ermanaric is traditionally considered the creator of this Ostrogoth 'empire', it cannot be ruled out that his predecessors had

134 Wolfram 1990, 96–97.

135 Wolfram 1990, 96. The fact that the Goths occupied an area of such great trade importance is widely accepted: Skarzhinskaia 1960, 266 (note 367); Łowmiański 1963, 400–401; Strzelczyk 1984, 74–75. However, the possible consequences of this fact are interpreted in various ways. Skarzhinskaia believes that the Goths maintained purely commercial relations with the people on Jordanes' list. Henryk Łowmiański assumes that trade was also accompanied by Gothic invasions, though these did not result in the imposition of political control. Jerzy Strzelczyk hypothesizes there existed some form of tributary or military-political dependence (forced alliances).

136 The author of this term, although he uses it in a slightly different sense, is Ananiasz Zajączkowski (1947, p. 77).

137 Urbańczyk 2000, 115.

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expressed similar aspirations. However, he was the one who managed to fully realize these intentions and to give the primitive raiding attacks of his forebears a more purposeful and rational form.[138]

2.3 Period of Dominance of Turkic Nomads

The political structure Ermanaric created proved to be quite fragile. Its collapse was brought about by the arrival of a new hegemon on the Black Sea steppe: the Turkic Huns. Their migration is of major importance to the history of Europe, especially its south-eastern regions. I am thinking here not only about the Huns initiating the 'migration of peoples', which was to contribute to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, but also to a number of important political and ethnic shifts that affected the entire Eurasia steppe, from the Volga River basin to the Hungarian plain. At the end of the 4th century, this area fell under the political domination of Turkic peoples, who gradually replaced the Indo-European groups living there.[139] Turkic nomads enjoyed a long, uninterrupted period of political supremacy on the Black Sea and Caspian steppe that only ended with the arrival of the Mongols in the 13th century.

Despite the great importance of their migration, our knowledge about the Huns' original area of settlement is limited. According to Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res gestae*, the Huns originally inhabited areas stretching from the Maeotic Sea to the Glacial Ocean.[140] Similar information can be found in Jordanes' account.[141] On the basis of these descriptions, little can be said about the Huns' geographical homelands. It is also difficult to determine how far to the east their nomadic settlements reached. In Ammianus Marcellinus' account, there is a tendency to locate the Huns at the borders of the *ecumene*, a suitable place for a people said to 'exceed every degree of savagery'.[142] We know even less about the origins of this tribe. Ammianus states that little was known by his predecessors about the Huns. Zosimos of Panopolis offers a stereotypical genealogy, ascribing Scythian origins to them, while Jordanes provides a legendary *origo*, according to which the Huns were descendants of the offspring of evil spirits and witches (the Halirunnae) who had been sent into exile by King Filimer.[143] This information does not allow us to say anything

138 Kokowski 2008, 167.
139 Łowmiański 1963a, 228–229; Czeglédy 1983, 29.
140 Amm.Marc. XXXI 2.1 (p. 380).
141 Iord. 123 (pp. 89–90).
142 Amm.Marc. XXXI 2.1 (p. 380).
143 Amm.Marc. XXXI 2.1 (p. 380); Zos. IV 20.3 (p. 174); Iord. 121–122 (p. 89).

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certain about the ethnogenesis of this people, but it clearly shows how great a shock their arrival created in the Mediterranean world.[144]

The findings of modern researchers do not provide much new information. In the eighteenth century, the French orientalist Joseph De Guignes hypothesized that a link existed between the so-called 'European Huns' and the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu) people,[145] who created a strong steppe empire near China and for many centuries posed a serious problem for their neighbours.[146] However, during a period of crisis in the Xiongnu state early in the Common Era, part of this ethnic group migrated to the west.[147] The European Huns are said to have later emerged from these peoples. This traditional concept has long been and continues to be accepted by many scholars,[148] but numerous researchers have doubts about this explanation. It cannot be ruled out that some groups of Xiongnu survived the collapse of their state, and joined the ranks of the European Huns after moving westwards. However, it is extremely difficult to prove this was indeed the case because there are no clear references to either of these two peoples during the period between the collapse of the Xiongnu state and the arrival of the Huns in Europe.[149]

The first victims of the Huns were the Alani, who lived on the Don. They were most likely conquered early in the 370s.[150] Following this victory, the Huns turned to the Kingdom of Ermanaric. Despite his initial efforts to challenge their invasion, the aging ruler was unable to halt the aggressors and committed suicide.[151] It is very likely that the arrival of the Huns unleashed tensions within Ermanaric's multi-ethnic state. It is strongly suggested by Jordanes' account of events during this period[152] that such tensions contributed significantly to the collapse of the monarch and his political system. Ermanaric's successor,

144 On the *origo* of the Huns: Maenchen-Helfen 1944a, 244–251; Tyszkiewicz 2001, 81–90.

145 Guignes 1756, 215–218.

146 Dąbrowski 1975, 29–35; Jagchid, Symons 1990, 24–36, 52–67, 114–120, 141–144, 165–170; Di Cosmo 2002; Barfield 1992, 32–84.

147 Dąbrowski 1975, 35.

148 Hirth 1899, 245–278; Gumilev 1966; Cf. Łowmiański 1963a, 229 (n. 704); Czeglédy 1983, 33; Tyszkiewicz 2004, 11–32; Kliashtornyi, Savinov 2005, 33, 35; Botalov 2009, 32; Hyun Jin Kim 2013, 26–31.

149 Maenchen-Helfen 1944, 222–243 (for a systematic analysis of the arguments in favour of such an identification of both peoples); 1973, 444–455; Sinor 1990, 178–179; Yu Taishan 2014, 233–264 (he analyzes the arguments justifying the identification of both peoples in order to conclude that the identity of the Huns and Xiongnu cannot be proven on the basis of these arguments). Cf. Łowmiański 1963a, 229–230.

150 Amm.Marc. XXXI 3.1 (pp. 394, 396). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 19–23; Dąbrowski 1975, 43; Sinor 1990, 180.

151 Amm.Marc. XXXI 3.2 (p. 396).

152 Iord. 129–130 (pp. 91–92). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 21–22; Strzelczyk 1984, 77–78.

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Witimir, identified by Jordanes as Winitar (Vinitharius), fought to maintain his people's independence, but was eventually killed in battle by Balamber, ruler of the Huns.[153] The Ostrogoths, like the Alani before them, were forced to submit to the rule of the invaders. They were now placed under the rule of Hunimund, a member of the Amali line and a vassal of the Huns. A group of Ostrogoths who refused to submit to the rule of the nomads left their people, and ultimately were given refuge in the Roman Empire.[154] These events occurred in ca. 375. The Huns soon took control of the lands up to the Dniester River, where Athanaricus, *iudex* (i.e., 'judge', as opposed to *rex*) and leader of the Visigoths, tried to halt their further expansion. But after twice suffering defeats on the battlefield, his rule was challenged by his people. Most Visigoths sought refuge within the Roman Empire, while Athanaricus and his followers took control of Caucaland,[155] an area usually located in the sources in either Transylvania[156] or Banat.[157] The influence of the Huns had now reached the Lower Danube, and soon contacts were established with Rome, which at the time was preoccupied with defending themselves from the Goths.

The organization of the Huns' society during this period is worthy of special attention. Available sources say very little on this subject, and much of what is written is fragmentary and based on stereotypes. Outside of Balamber, whose historicity is questioned by some researchers,[158] we know none of the names of the Huns' rulers from the mid- to late-4th century. The names of the first chiefs are known only from an account describing events dating back to 395. Such the case, it can be concluded that until the beginning of the 5th century we cannot speak of the existence of a single ruler to whose authority all Hun groups submitted. Individual tribal units are believed to have enjoyed considerable independence, as evidenced by the ease with which they were able to shift their allegiance to Rome and acquire the status of *foederati*.[159] Some scholars even suggest that there was no strong sense of solidarity or ethnic awareness among the Huns. It would seem, however, that a great deal of caution needs to be exercised in regard to such findings, due to the unreliability

153 Amm.Marc. XXXI 3.3 (p. 396); Iord. 246–249 (pp. 121–122). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 22–23; Sinor 1990, 180.

154 Amm.Marc. XXXI 3.3 (p. 396); 12,12 (p. 468); Iord. 250 (p. 122). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1970, 26–27; Sinor 1990, 180.

155 Amm.Marc. XXXI 3.4–8 (pp. 396, 398, 400); 4/12 (pp. 406, 408); Iord. 131–133 (p. 92).

156 More precisely, in the Strâmba river valley (Hungarian: Tekerőpatak), which is a tributary of the Mureş river (Hungarian: Maros).

157 The area between the Mureş (Hungarian Maros), Tisza and Danube Rivers. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 25–26.

158 Thomson 1948, 57.

159 Sinor 1990, 181–182.

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of the sources at our disposal. Compared to the period analyzed here (very late 4th century), these sources are few in number and burdened with strong negative stereotypes. Their authors, even ones as outstanding as Ammianus Marcellinus, present the Huns as wild, lawless creatures, deprived of moral principles and growing out of a horse's body like a centaur.[160] 'Though they live in the form of men, they have the cruelty of wild beasts', writes Jordanes.[161] The Huns' alleged lack of leaders fits perfectly with the image of them as a horde of wild animals, devoid of leadership. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that nomads capable of defeating theoretically better organized enemies (e.g., the Ostrogoths and Visigoths) would have fought without commanders.

The Huns' main settlements at the end of the 4th century were most likely located on the Black Sea steppe. This is indicated by their incursions deep into West Asia. In 395–396, the Huns launched a major invasion led by Basich and Kursich through the Caucasus into Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and northern Mesopotamia. The aim of this attack was apparently plunder, as evidenced by the fact that the invaders took large herds of cattle.[162] The type of booty taken suggests that the Huns' invasion may have been prompted by hunger they were suffering on the Pontic steppe.[163] In the west, nomadic groups controlled Pannonia, Wallachia, and Dobrudja. The lands of the latter became the starting point for attacks on Rome, which became widespread in the 5th century. These were carried out by Uldis – the second Hun ruler (after Balamber) known to us by name – who is known to have invaded Thrace two times (404–405, 408).[164] The purpose of these invasions was primarily plunder and there was no attempt by the Huns to instate their rule on lands belonging to the Empire.

In 412–413, Olympiodorus of Thebes was sent to the Huns on a diplomatic mission. Accounts of his work as an envoy have been preserved only in fragmentary forms. We do not know exactly who he represented. Some researchers believe he was an agent of Emperor Honorius and met with the Hun king Charaton in Pannonia. Others believe that he was sent by Theodosius II and that the meeting place was the Black Sea steppe. We also do not know the purpose of this mission.[165]

160 Amm.Marc. XXXI 2. 2–11 (pp. 380, 382, 384, 386).

161 Iord. 128 (p. 91): Hi vero sub hominum figura vivunt beluina saevitia. English translation: Mierow 2007, 75.

162 Prisc. 11.2 (pp. 276, 278) Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 51–59; Sinor 1990, 182. The expedition of Basich and Kursich to West Asia described by Priscos sometimes is dated back to 420–430: Demougeot 1979, 517–518; Kazanski, Mastykova 2009, 123–124; Kazanski 2009, 85.

163 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 52; Sinor 1990, 183.

164 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 59–72; Sinor 1990, 184–185.

165 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 73–74; Sinor 1990, 185–186.

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We hear about the Huns again in accounts of a major invasion in 422 during which they ravaged Thrace and reached the gates of Constantinople. Two kings, Roas (Rugila, Ruga) and his brother Octar, ruled jointly over the Huns. The people's political affairs were handled by Roas, who also led its military expeditions. He forced Theodosius II to sign a peace agreement which provided for payment by the Eastern Roman Empire of a tribute in the amount of 350 pounds of gold a year.[166] However, from the time of Roas to the 440s, the Huns' rulers continued to actively engage Byzantium along its Balkan border. As in the time of Uldis (Ulti), the nomads' military actions in the region were not aimed at territorial expansion. The objectives of both Roas and Octar and, later, Attila and Bleda, were limited to extracting ample tributes, demanding the extradition of fugitives who had taken refuge within the Empire, and selling back the Romans they held in captivity for a handsome sum.[167]

After a peace with the Western Roman Empire had been consolidated in 432/3, the Huns made preparations for another invasion of the Byzantine Empire. The reason for this was said to be their desire to pacify certain tribes that the Hun ruler considered to be his subjects and which had taken refuge within the territory of the empire. The sudden death of Roas did not save Constantinople from danger, because his successors, Attila and Bleda, continued the political course set by their uncle. To maintain the peace, Byzantium was forced agree in 433 to double its annual tribute, pay amends for fugitives in its territory, and conclude a trade agreement with the Huns.[168]

For the next several years, there was peace in the Balkans. The nomads did not cross the empire's border, which ran along the Danube, even in the face of growing arrears in Constantinople's tribute payments. However, a new conflict, the exact course of which is unclear, erupted in 441 and ended in a severe defeat for the empire.[169] The provisions of the peace agreement, dated 447, were extremely harsh. Constantinople would now have to pay an annual tribute of 2,100 pounds of gold (six times as much as in 422), was obliged to immediately pay 6,000 pounds in payments in arrears, once again pay amends for fugitives who had taken refuge in the empire, and finally, agree to withdraw from a strip of land south of the Danube five-day's travel in width. This 'demilitarized zone' was intended to allow for easy observation of the movements

166 Prisc. 2 (p. 224). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 76, 81–94; Sinor 1990, 186–188.

167 The ransom increased in successive arrangements: in 433 it was 8 gold pieces, in 447–12 pieces per head. Prisc. 2 (p. 226), 9.3 (p. 236).

168 Prisc. 2 (pp. 224, 226). The agreement of 433 covers the equal treatment of Huns and Romans in marketplaces. Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 90; Sinor 1990, 188.

169 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 102–123.

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of military units and people in the area.[170] It is difficult to say whether this last point of the agreement was ever carried out. The imminent death of Theodosius II (27 July 450) and a radical change in policy towards the Huns by his successor Marcian suggest that such a withdrawal never took place.[171]

At this time, we can also observe greater involvement by Attila in the West. His intentions now were much more ambitious and far-reaching, including winning the hand of Augusta Honoria, sister of Emperor Valentinian III, and with this marriage, attaining great influence in the Western Roman Empire.[172] Attila invaded Gaul in 451, but his troops were defeated in the Battle of the Catalaunian Fields by a coalition of Roman and Visigoth armies. As a result of this defeat, Attila failed to achieve the main goal of the campaign, i.e., the destruction of the Roman legions in Gaul.[173] However, this was not the beginning of the end for the Huns or for Attila. This was demonstrated the following year, when the Huns invaded northern Italy and plundered the cities of the Po Valley. This time, too, the invasion was not a complete success. According to tradition, Attila abandoned plans for a march on Rome after being persuaded to do so by Pope Leo I. Otto Maenchen-Helfen believes the primary reason for this decision was actually an epidemic that had begun to decimate the ranks of the barbarians. It also cannot be ruled out that Attila met with a determined defence that halted his advance at the foot of the Apennines.[174]

The sources we have at our disposal provide a much more palpable account of the history of the Huns' involvement in fighting in the Balkans and Western Europe. Yet for our purposes, much more important is their activity in the east of the Continent, with a particular emphasis on the Black Sea and Caspian steppe. Indeed, in Attila's time and even earlier, it cannot be ruled out that the centre of the Huns' lands was in the west. In the mid-5th century, this was the area between the Danube and Tisza (Tisa) Rivers. However, there is no reason to believe that the Huns gave up control of the Black Sea steppe during this period,[175] as it remained a region of great strategic importance, and was

170 Prisc. 9.3 (p. 236), 11.1 (p. 242). Cf. Wirth 1960, 41–69; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 124–125; Sinor 1990, 189–190.

171 Sinor 1990, 192.

172 Prisc. 20.1 (pp. 304, 306), 20.3 (pp. 306, 308). Cf. Gračanin 2003, 62, 64–67; Tyszkiewicz 2004, 141–160.

173 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 129–131.

174 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 132–141; Sinor 1990, 192–196.

175 According to Priscos of Panion, Attila 'ruled the islands of the Ocean and, in addition to the whole of Scythia, forced the Romans to pay tribute.' Whatever is meant by the second of the geographical concepts mentioned by the Byzantine diplomat, it seems that it probably covers significant stretches of the Eastern European steppe. Prisc. 11.2 (p. 276). On the possible meanings of the use of this phrase by Priscos: Paroń 2006, 448, 450; 2013, 226.

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close to the heart of the lands they controlled. The Huns' interest in this area is demonstrated by incidents related to a failed diplomatic mission carried out by an unknown agent of Theodosius II to the Akatziri. Information about this mission, the aim of which was the forming of an alliance with the Akatziri, is found in the writings of Priscos of Panion.[176] If Byzantium had been successful, it would have gained a very valuable ally, as the Akatziri inhabited areas to the rear of the Huns. Constantinople's plans, however, were never realized because one of the tribal chiefs, Kouridachus, reported the Byzantine plot. In 445, a punitive expedition was launched against the tribes which had conspired with Constantinople.[177] All of the Akatziri leaders, with the exception of Kouridachus, were placed under the rule of Ellac, Attila's eldest son.[178]

The death of Attila (453) and the Huns' defeat in the Battle of Nedao (454 or 455) resulted in a sudden disintegration of their empire. The nomads suffered huge losses, with nearly 30,000 warriors killed, including Ellac.[179] Those who survived the slaughter withdrew under the command of Irnich to 'Lesser Scythia' (probably today's Dobrudja), while Ellac's place was taken by Dengizich. In 466, the brothers approached Emperor Leo I with a proposal for peace and a request to designate sites through which the Huns could trade with Byzantium. The Emperor's refusal infuriated Dengizich, who began preparations for renewed military action; Irnich, however, preferred a different path of action, and for a time conflict was avoided.[180] But this calm did not last long. Three years later, Dengizich died in battle fighting the Romans in an effort to win the status of *foederati* for his people. The surviving nomads took refuge within the empire.[181] At this point, we hear nothing more about Irnich and the Huns under his rule. The fact that his name is found second on a list of

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Archaeological data also support similar conclusions. Remnants of material culture discovered in the area, ranging from the central Danube to the Ural Mountains and western Kazakhstan, show a number of similarities. Researchers, however, distinguish two separate regions, the border of which ran along the Dnieper River. The western region is said to have been inhabited by the Huns, while the eastern regions were inhabited by peoples subordinate to them. Kazanski, Mastykova 2009, 114–126; Kazanski 2009, 65–404.

176 Prisc. 11.2 (p. 258).

177 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 103–105.

178 Sinor 1990, 190–191; Kazanski, Mastykova 2009, 124 (researchers locate Akatziri's dwellings on the Don and in the Crimea).

179 Iord. 262 (p. 125). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 147–151; Sinor 1990, 197–198.

180 Prisc. 46 (p. 352). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 165–166 (believes that the settlements of Dengizich and his people were located in the area of today's Wallachia).

181 Prisc. 48 (p. 354). Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 166–168.

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Bulgar princes seems to indicate that his people may have survived and later become part of the Bulgar tribal union.[182]

But was he able to maintain his hegemony on the Black Sea steppe? Probably not. Political changes were taking place in the region triggered by new migrations dating back to ca. 463. According to Priscos of Panion, the Black Sea steppe was invaded at that time by peoples of the Saragur, Ugor and Onogur tribes. These tribes were forced to leave by the Sabir people, who in turn were forced to migrate by the Avars, who were said to be fleeing from a horde of man-eating griffins (sic!).[183] This last piece of information is most likely a *topos* borrowed from Herodotus by which the author tries to explain the reason for the Avars' migration, which he apparently does not know.[184] The above-mentioned tribes are usually labelled together in scientific literature as Oghuric tribes; before their arrival on the Black Sea steppe, they probably lived in western Siberia and the steppe of Kazakhstan. Some researchers assume that they comprised the western part of a tribal union referred to by Chinese sources as T'ie-lê.[185] Western Siberia, the Ili River valley and western Tien-Shan were the seat of the Sabirs.[186] The expansion of the Avars, who forced the Sabirs to migrate, was probably the root cause of the defeat inflicted on them by China in 460.[187] After arriving on the Black Sea steppe, the Oghurs quickly became the dominant force in the region. Initially, the dominant position was held by the Saragurs, who in 467 conquered the Akatziri and other unknown peoples.[188] They soon attracted the attention of Byzantine diplomats. Having formed an alliance with Constantinople, the Saragurs directed their military forces against the Persian empire.[189] Afterwards, however, there is no further mention of their name in the sources.[190]

The first mention of the Bulgars, who at that time were allied with Emperor Zenon against Theodoric, ruler of the Ostrogoths, dates back to 480. The ethnonym 'Bulgar', which is usually translated as 'mixed', was applied to various peoples, but predominately to Huns and Oghurs. Their area of activity in the coming centuries would range from the North Caucasus to the Lower

182 Sinor 1990, 198–199; Golden 1980, 43; 1990, 256–257.
183 Prisc. 40.1, 40.2 (p. 344).
184 Moravcsik 1930, 55–59.
185 Czeglédy 1983, 35–37, 100, 109–110; Golden 1990, 257.
186 Czeglédy 1983, 37, 100; Golden 1990, 257.
187 Golden 1990, 258.
188 Prisc. 40.1, 40.2 (p. 344).
189 Prisc. 47 (pp. 352, 354). Cf. Czeglédy 1983, 97–98; Romashov 1992–94, 218–19.
190 Moravcsik 1930, 59–62. The last mention of the Saragurs is made by Zacharias Rhetor (6th c.). Cf. Golden 1990, 258; Romashov 1992–94, 219 (the scholar assumes that their existence as an independent ethnos came to an end as the result of their defeat by the Turks).

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Danube.[191] At the turn of the fifth/sixth century, strong ethne may have already existed here. The area east of the Dnieper and west of the Don, and perhaps as far as the lower Danube, was occupied by the Kutrigurs. Their neighbours to the east were the Utigurs, who lived between the Don and Kuban Rivers. The nomadic settlements of the Onogurs were located on the Kuban River itself.[192] The relations between these tribal groups and Byzantium, especially those of the Kutrigurs, took various shapes. Periods of peace and cooperation were interwoven with invasions and armed confrontations. In 499 the Bulgars broke their alliance with Constantinople and began a series of invasions, which at intervals of several years plagued the Balkan provinces of Byzantium. In 517 they reached Thermopylae, and in 530 they ravaged Illyricum.[193] In the same year, Kutrigur troops fought as an ally of the Empire in Italy.[194] In the years 539–540 they once again became an enemy of Byzantium. During their invasions, which date back to the mid-sixth century (551, 559), they reached Constantinople and entered Greece and Asia Minor. Due to Justinian the Great's diplomatic efforts, a fratricidal war broke out between the Utigurs and Kutrigurs, which resulted in a short break in the Bulgars' attacks on Byzantium.[195] The appearance of the Avars on the Black Sea steppe temporarily lessened the threat from the Bulgars.[196]

In the early years of the next century, another participant in the migration of 463, the Sabirs, settled in the Volga region and the northern Caucasus, where they quickly became the dominant political force. In 508, they devastated Armenia, and in later years, fought as an ally of Byzantium against Persia.[197]

At the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries, a rather short-lived balance of power emerged on the Black Sea and Caspian steppe. The western part of the region was controlled by Oghuric tribes, and the eastern part by the Sabirs. However, this political order broke down in the mid-6th century following the arrival of the Avars.

The relationship between these Avars and those mentioned in the accounts of Priscos of Panion is unclear. Until recently, both were generally identified as the same group, and it was assumed that the forerunner of this ethnos was

191 Beševliev 1981, 75; Romashov 1992–94, 205–208, Pohl 2008, 281–282; Ziemann 2007, 38–39, 44–45.

192 Romashov 1992–94, 209–217, 251; Wasilewski 1988, 32–33; Golden 1990, 258; Ziemann 2007, 95–103.

193 Beševliev 1981, 77–81; Wasilewski 1988, 33.

194 Golden 1980, 34–36; 1990, 258–259.

195 Syrbe 2012, 295–298.

196 Beševliev 1981, 95–101; Wasilewski 1980, 33.

197 Golden 1990, 259–260.

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what is known in Chinese sources as the Rouran Confederation.[198] In 551, an uprising against the Rouran broke out among the Göktürk people, who lived under their rule. They quickly brought down the state established by their former rulers and forced them to flee westward. As in the case of the Huns, however, the issue of their ethnogenesis is complicated.[199] The main role in the formation of this nomadic group was probably not played by the defeated and discredited Rouran, although some aspects of their political organization were quite likely incorporated into that of the Avars.

In 557 or 558, the Avars established contacts with Constantinople.[200] They quickly brought the Sabirs, Alani, and all three Oghuric tribal unions under their rule.[201] Their reign, however, proved to be rather short-lived, as in 567 the Avars were forced to moved on to Pannonia under pressure from newly-arrived Göktürks.[202]

Ultimately, in spite of resistance from the Onogurs and the Alani, the Göktürks had few problems bringing the steppe region under their control.[203] The fact that Persia was a common enemy for both Byzantium and this new dominant power on the Black Sea steppe opened up opportunities for political cooperation between the two. However, the Byzantines' delay during a previously arranged joint campaign angered the Göktürks, who in retaliation attacked and occupied the Crimean Boporus. The expansion of nomadic groups also affected the northern Caucasus, where Abkhaz tribes, among others, were conquered. Hostility between Constantinople and the rulers of the Ashina clan continued up until the collapse of the Turkic Khaganate.[204] The main reason for its downfall was a civil war fueled by China's Sui dynasty (584). In 604, the political unity of the khaganate was ultimately broken, and it splintered into two rival orders: eastern and western. The latter included territories to the west of the Dzungarian Basin. Continual internal conflicts led to the weakening of the Western Turkic Khaganate. However, the death blow was struck by the powerful Chinese Tang Dynasty, which until the end of the seventh century would maintain a weak, vassal khaganate in its place.[205]

198 Czeglédy 1983, 105, 106–107, 118.
199 Szymański 1979, 25–31; Pohl 1988, 278–281; Yu Taishan 2014a, 297–325.
200 Pohl 1988, 37–38; Golden 1990, 260.
201 Pohl 1988, 39–40; Golden 1990, 260.
202 Pohl 1988, 49–51; Golden 1990, 260.
203 Romashov 1992–94, 228–230; Golden 1990, 260.
204 Golden 1980, 38–39; 1990, 260–261; Sinor 1990a, 304–305.
205 Gumilev 1993, 135–147, 154–160; Golden 1980, 39; Sinor 1990a, 305–308; Romashov 1992–94, 231–2.

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The loosening of Turkic control over the Pontic-Caspian steppe, caused by the issues described above, led to changes in political relations within the region. On the one hand, there was a return of Avar influences, especially in the western part of the Black Sea steppe. At the turn of the 6th and 7th centuries, the Avar Khaganate was at the height of it power and posed a serious threat to Byzantium.[206] Yet there was also a progressive strengthening of Oghuric tribes, the strongest of which turned out to be the Onogurs, whose settlements were on the Kuban River. The Onogurs took part in the T'ie-lê confederation's uprising against the Göktürks.[207] They also sought to emancipate themselves from Avar influence. This last fact made them a natural ally of Byzantium. Friendly relations with Emperor Heraclius were maintained by Orkhan, the Onogur Khan. In 619 he arrived with his family and an extensive entourage to Constantinople, where he was baptized and received the rank of patrician from the Emperor.[208] His nephew Kubrat, a member of the Dulo clan, was taken as a hostage to Byzantium, where he accepted Christianity. In 635, he defeated the Avars and renounced his allegiance to the Turks. During his reign, so-called Great Bulgaria was created, stretching from the Kuban to the Dnieper and including the tribal union of the Kutrigurs, who had previously been under Avar rule. Kubrat, like his predecessor, maintained friendly relations with Constantinople, whose support allowed him to create a vast political body.[209] However, the hegemony of the Onogur Bulgars on the Black Sea steppe did not last long. By the mid-7th century disruptive forces began to show themselves. According to Byzantine sources, at the time of his death, Kubrat had five sons who, despite his father's admonitions, failed to maintain a united front, and divided their people instead. This state of affairs made them vulnerable to outside enemies like the Khazars, and around 660, Great Bulgaria disintegrated under pressure from them.[210] The various sons of Kubrat all reacted differently to the threat posed by the Khazars. The oldest son Batbaian (Βατβαιᾶν/Βαιανός) remained in his homeland and came to terms with Khazar

206 Szymański 1979, 32–41; Pohl 1988, 58–59, 128–162, 237–255; Kliashtornyi, Savinov 2005, 92–101.

207 Czeglédy 1983, 109–112; Golden 1990, 261.

208 Golden 1980, 44; Wasilewski 1988, 33.

209 Moravcsik 1930, 71; Wasilewski 1988, 33; Beševliev 1981, 145–148; Golden 1980, 44; 1990, 261–262; Romashov, 232–244; Kliashtornyi, Savinov 2005, 98.

210 Dunlop 1954, 41–43; Tryjarski 1975, 174–176; Beševliev 1981, 149–155; Wasilewski 1988, 33–34; Golden 1980, 44–45; 1990, 262; Romashov 1992–92, 249–250. The relationship between the fratricidal struggle between Kubrat's sons and the Khazar attack is unclear and has been a frequent topic of discussion. Recently, Veselina Vachkova (2008, 351 (n. 25) has described this issue as a typical academic problem.

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rule. Kotrag (Κῶτραγος) withdrew north to the Don.[211] His people later made their way (no earlier than the mid-8th century) to the Volga in the environs of the Kama River Estuary, where a state known as the Volga-Kama Bulgaria was established. A group led by Asparukh (Ἀσπαρούχ), another son of Kubrat, crossed the Dnieper River and settled on the lower Danube around 680, giving rise to the First Bulgarian Empire. Finally, the last two unnamed sons, whose existence is often questioned by scholars, were to move to the westernmost lands with their peoples. One reached Pannonia, where he recognized the sovereignty of the Avars; the other travelled to Italy and settled near Ravenna. In this way, the legend attempts to explain the presence of Bulgar groups in Italy and Pannonia.[212]

In the latter half of the 7th century, the rulers of the Khazar Khaganate became the new masters of the Black Sea and Caspian steppe. This political organism deserves a closer look for a number of reasons, the most important of which – its longevity and stability – are of exceptional importance in steppe conditions. Not much is known about its origins. It was most likely an amalgam of nomadic tribes (including Sabirs, Oghurs and Göktürks) headed by a charismatic Turkic family, which were the main elements contributing to the creation of the Khazar Khaganate.[213] The early history of the Khazars is therefore very closely connected with the history of the Turkic Khaganate, and more specifically with the period of its domination in the western part of the Great Steppe. The Khazars emerged suddenly from the chaos that arose during the weakness and fall of the Western Ashinids and created a new khganate. Information about the Khazar language is scant and often contradictory. Arabic writers suggest it was similar to other Turkic languages, although they also emphasize its specificity. The few extant pieces of linguistic evidence seem to indicate a close affinity with what has been dubbed the 'common Turkic language', but, as Peter Golden states, there is no definitive proof of this.[214] Between the 7th to the mid-9th centuries, the Khazars' expansion spread across vast areas of the Black Sea and Caspian steppe, sporadically extending even beyond these borders. The Khaganate's influence stretched from the Kama River in the north to the Caucasus in the south, and from the Don and

211 This interpretation has been rejected by István Zimonyi, who rightly points out that in the Byzantine tradition descriptions of events associated with the break-up of 'Great Bulgaria' contain no mention of any group of refugees that supposedly reached the confluence of the Kama and the Volga. Zimonyi 1990, 62–63.

212 Moravcsik 1930, 71–73; Tryjaski 1975, 175–176, Golden 1990, 262–263.

213 Pletneva 1976, 14–23. Golden 1980, 58–59; 1990, 263; 2005, 57–59.

214 Golden 1980, 51–57; 1990, 263–264; Erdal 2005, 125–139 (He is highly sceptical of the assumptions made to date).

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Donets Rivers in the west to the Ural River in the east. Like the kingdom of the Goths in the 4th century, this political organism had a territorial core located in the region of the Volga estuary and the steppe of the North Caucasus. The remaining areas were Khazar protectorates. It cannot be ruled out that from at least the first half of the 9th century the sovereignty of the Khaganate was recognized by the lands of East Slavdom, including Kiev.[215]

Such a vast and ethnically diverse organism was characterized by its strong vitality. Up until the mid-10th century, the Khazar Khaganate was the strongest state in Eastern Europe, and the main force determining the political relations in the region. It was able both to effectively limit the migration of warlike nomads from the Transvolga Region and Inner Asia and to hold back Arab expansion. The Khazars created a political order with a high level of stability and security in the light of steppe conditions. Ananiasz Zajączkowski described it as the *Pax Chazarica*.[216] The Polish scholar noted that it allowed for the creation of optimal conditions for the development of trade in the region, which was centred along the Volga River,[217] with the Khaganate's last capital (Itil) lying on its delta near the Caspian Sea.[218]

Other forms of economic activity also expanded greatly in the Khazar state. This is indicated by archaeological remains of the Saltovo-Maiaki culture, which was centred in the basin formed by the Don, Donets and their tributaries. Remains of it have also been found in Dagestan, Eastern Crimea and on the Black Sea steppe. A slightly different variant of Saltovo-Maiaki culture has been also observed along the central Volga. It existed from the mid-8th to the 10th century, and therefore corresponds to the period of splendour and gradual disintegration of the Khazar Khaganate. The creators of this archaeological culture are said to have been peoples from within the Khaganate, but its territorial range does not fully coincide with the that of the Khazar state. Based on a comparison of funeral rites, the closest archaeological match is between two groups under Khazar rule, the Bulgars and the Alani. The first of these peoples, who were based in the steppe north of the Sea of Azov, buried skeletal

215 Golden 1980, 86–88; 1990, 264; Pletneva 1976, 43–60. According to an account by Ahmed ibn Fadlan from the first half of the 10th century, the ruler of Khazaria collected tribute from 25 peoples whose leaders were likewise obliged to give him their daughters in marriage. ibn Fadlan-Yaqut: ibn Fadlan, 256/7. Cf. Dunlop 1954, 140–2.

216 Zajączkowski 1947, 77; Cf. Boba 1967, 226.

217 Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1975, 422–431.

218 On Khazar cities: Artamonov 1962, 178, 211, 219–220, 222–3, 234–5, 387–8, 398–9; Pletneva 1967; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1978, 125–134; Romashov 2004, 189–264; Flerov 2011 (the researcher consistently proves that there were no Khazar cities. He even refuses to consider Itil a city); Zhivkov 2015, 196–212.

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remains in grave pits, while the latter, who lived somewhat further north in the forest-steppe zone, buried their dead in catacomb tombs. A significant part of the population of the Saltovo-Maiaki culture made a living from animal husbandry. Traces of yurts discovered by archaeologists testify to their connection to a nomadic lifestyle. However, remains of this culture have also been found in settlements and strongholds. We can thus observe a progressive process of sedentarization, with a large part of the population living a settled or semi-settled lifestyle, and engaging in activities typical of such a lifestyle. Land cultivation was also on an advanced level, as indicated by the agricultural tools discovered (ploughs with iron fittings, sickles). Gardens and vineyards were also cultivated, and hunting and fishing played an important role in the economy, as well, providing a source of additional income for both shepherds and farmers. Crafts were also well-developed, including smithing, goldsmithing, and pottery-making, which is unusual for nomads. Production of this kind flourished mainly in towns and strongholds. Yet among the settled population there were also signs of continued nomadic traditions. It is believed that some farmers left town each spring, and returned in autumn with their harvests.[219]

The diversity of the Khaganate's population in terms of material culture is accompanied by a diversity in terms of spiritual culture. This can best be seen in religious practices. With time, Judaism became the dominant religion, i.e., the religion practiced by the Khazar elites. It is difficult to determine the date of this conversion and the circumstances surrounding it. It most likely occurred over a period of time between 750 and 850.[220] The conversion of the elites, however, was not linked to persecution of believers of other religions. Evidence of tolerance towards dissenters is found in information preserved in al-Masudi's writings. Writing in the 10th century, the Arab author mentions the appointment by the Khazar rulers of seven judges who were to pass sentences

219 Pletneva 1967, 144f.; 1999, 7–23; Hilczer-Kurnatowska 1975, 30–34; Noonan 1995–97 253–318; 2007 207–244. The last scholar believes that the highly diversified nature of the Khaganate's economy, i.e., the existence of such a wide range of economic activities, a diversity exceptional on the steppe, made the Khazar state particularly resilient. At the same time, he states that the main source of crisis within the state, and to a considerable extent, the reason for its downfall, was a decline in the importance of the Volga trade route in the late 9th century. Thomas Noonan thus recognizes the crucial role of trade in the Khaganate's economy. A slightly more nuanced picture has been recently presented by Boris Zhivkov: 2015, 171–220.

220 Dunlop 1954, 85f.; Artamonov 1962, 264–290; Pletneva 1976, 62; Golden 1983, 134–139; Petrukhin 2001, 111–113; Zuckerman 1995, 241–250 (he dates the conversion to Judaism to 861 or soon afterwards); Kovalev 2005, 220–253; L'vova 2005, 143–152 (the Russian scholar assumes that the first khagan to follow Judaism was Aibat (after 690–730/1).

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in accordance with the laws in force for a given religious group. Christians, Jews, and Muslims had two judges each, while pagans had one.[221]

The foreign policy of the Khazar rulers often involved entering into alliances with Byzantium, although relations between successive khagans and *basileis* were not always friendly.[222] This cooperation between the two states dated back to 626, when the Khazars fought as allies of Emperor Heraclius in his campaigns against the Avars and Persians.[223] The subsequent destruction of Great Bulgaria, also an ally of Byzantium, as well as competition for influence in the Crimea and South Caucasus certainly distanced the two states from each other. The main factor contributing to the improvement of Khazar-Byzantine relations seems to have been the threat from the Arabs. The Khazars had been fighting wars with them since 642. Initially, this fighting did not bring much success to either side. In 737, a military breakthrough occurred that posed great dangers for the Khazars. The Arab leader and future caliph Marwan ben Muhammad successfully invaded the Lower Volga and occupied the heart of the Khaganate. The Khazar ruler was forced to fee and seek refuge in the territory of his vassals, the Burtas. The Khazars, wanting to preserve at least some of their people's cultural distinctiveness, recognized the sovereignty of the Caliph and adopted the Muslim religion. This forced conversion was soon renounced, and war once again broke out between the two sides. A conflict began that continued without resolution until the end of the 8th century. With time a lasting political balance was re-established in the Caucasus region. The city of Derbent (Bab al-Awab) marked the border of the two sides' spheres of influence. Yet, contrary to popular belief, the Khazars did not so much stop Arab expansion into the region as merely provoke conflicts with the Caliphate through their bellicose actions and attacks.[224] However, this does not change the fact that their hostile attitude towards the Islamic world naturally brought them closer to Byzantium.

The role played by the Khazar Khaganate on the Black Sea steppe was a second argument for convincing Constantinople that friendly relations should be maintained. Thanks to the Khazars, from the middle of the seventh century to the end of the ninth century, we do not hear of any serious ethnic shifts in

221 Al-Masudi, 11; Pellat 1962, 162. Cf. Por. Dunlop 1954, 93, 206–207; Golden 1990, 266. For more on the subject of the Khaganate's ideological and religious syncretism: Zhivkov 2015, 17–126.

222 The existence of such a close relationship between the Khazars and Byzantium has been justifiably questioned by Noonan (1992, 109–132).

223 Golden 1980, 50–51; Gumilev 1993, 196–201.

224 Dunlop 1954, 45–87; Pletneva 1976, 35–42; Golden 1980, 59–65; 1990, 264–265; Wasserstein 2007, 373–386.

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the region of Black Sea-Caspian steppe. The only exception, dating back to the beginning of the second third of the 9th century, was the migration of Magyars, which did not lead to any major political perturbations. Byzantine sources note the empire's role in helping to build the Sarkel fortress, situated on the Don. This suggests that the Khazars acted as a policeman, maintaining stability and the political balance on the Black Sea and Caspian steppe, and did so with the approval and support of Constantinople.[225] Earlier marriages of the Byzantine rulers Justinian II (685–695; 705–711) and Constantine V (741–775) to Khazar princesses provide an additional example illustrating the proximity of contacts between the two states.[226]

At the end of the 9th century, the first signs of crisis in this efficient and stable political structure began to appear. The creation of a Rus' state and the shift of its centre to Kiev on the middle Dnieper triggered the process of freeing East Slavic tribes from their submission to the Khaganate.[227] Thus, just beyond the borders of the Khazar state a dangerous and highly expansive rival appeared – Kievian Rus' – that would ultimately contribute to its downfall. At the same time, ethnic shifts were taking place that initially must have been problematic for the Khazar monarchy. The Pechenegs were one of the main participants in these shifts.

They appeared on the Black Sea steppe during a period of profound change, which would eventually turn the steppe into a niche region, surrounded by powerful and stable monarchies of sedentary peoples. From the nomads' point of view these changes were not beneficial. The Black Sea steppe had previously been part of the Great Steppe politically, and events there determined mainly by ethnic shifts among its inhabitants themselves. The nomadic 'early states' created by the Scythians and Khazars proved to be more resistant to such disruptive changes. The secret of their relative success seems to have been their development of a more diversified economy and the ability to create links between the worlds of nomads and of settled farmers. This first skill gave them the ability to rationally exploit the agricultural population, which was subjected to the authority of the steppe rulers; the second allowed the nomads to fulfil the role of a commercial intermediary, establishing trade ties between the 'barbaric' North and the rich and civilized South. This role, however, required the existence of a strict binary system consisting of a nomadic political organism

225 Th.Cont., 122f.; DAI XLII (pp. 182, 184). Cf. Pletneva 1967, 3–50, 44–46; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1978, 131–134; Romashov 2004, 214–217; Ostrogorski 1967, 136, 162; Golden 1974, 62–63; 1980, 67f.; 1990, 265, 267.

226 Ostrogorski 1967, 136, 162; Vachkova 2008, 351–358.

227 Artamonov 1962, 400–424; Pletneva 1976, 61–71; Golden 1990, 268–269.

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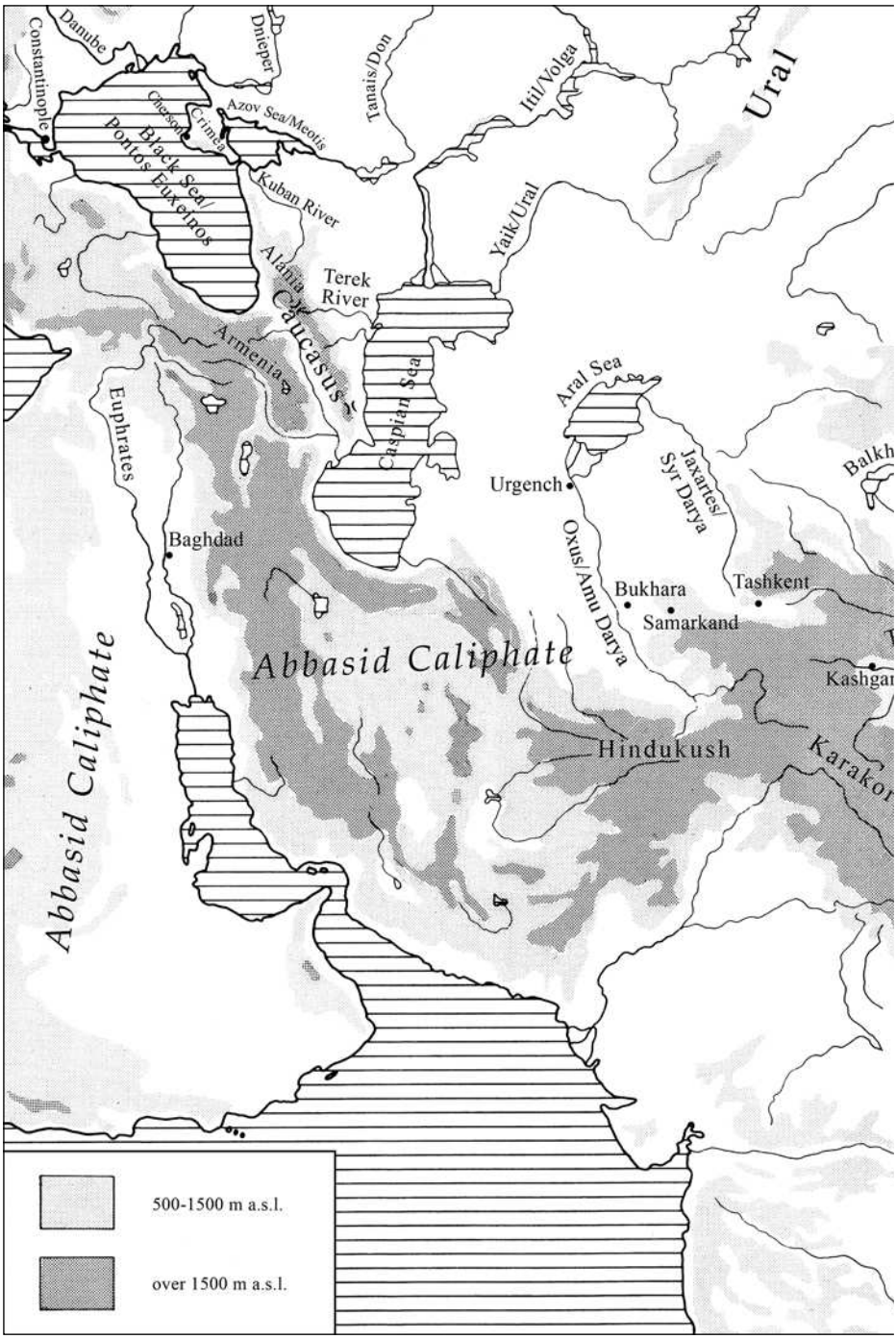

MAP 1 The Eurasian Steppe

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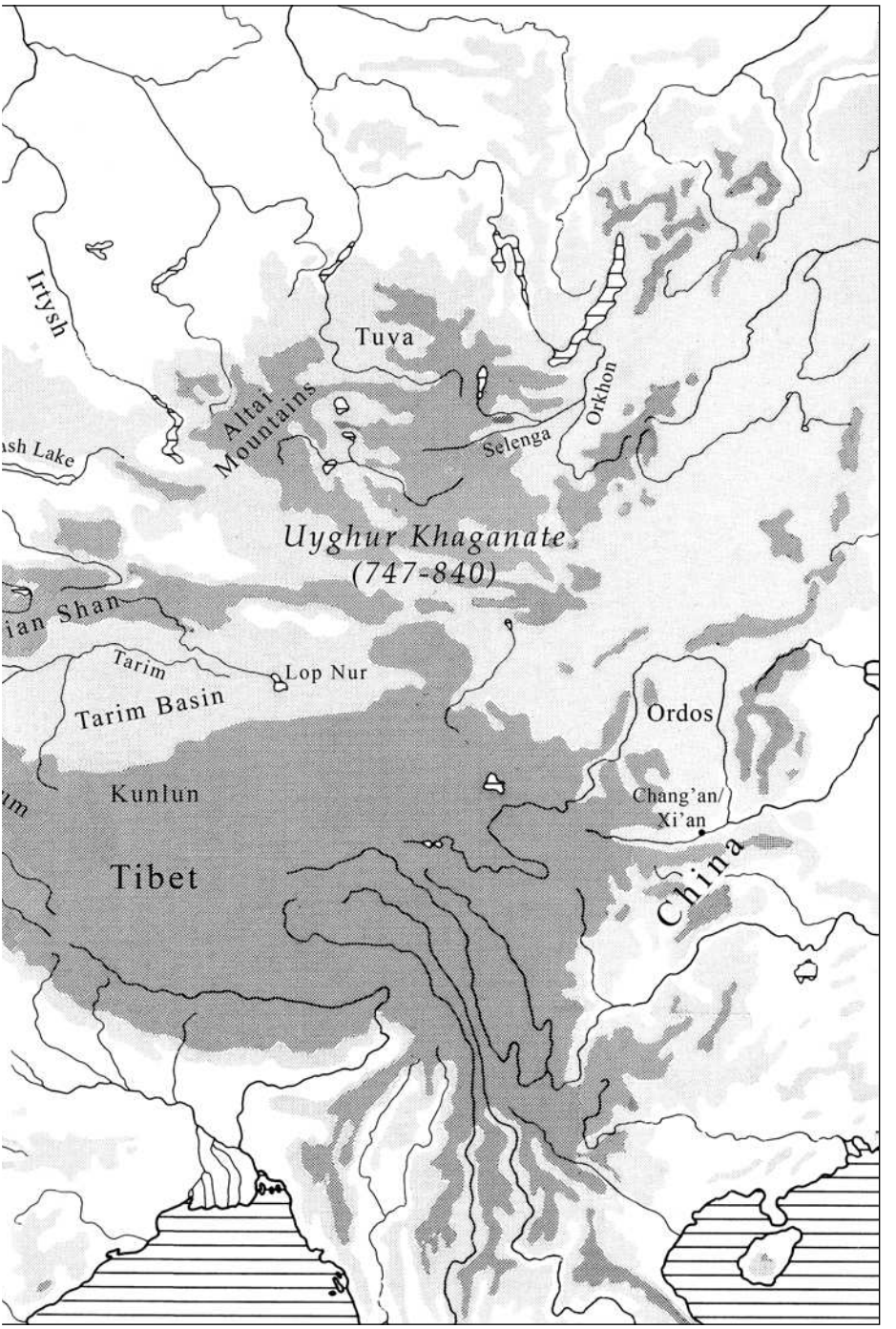

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and its southern agricultural counterpart(s). If a strong political organism arose just outside the steppe zone, the presence of a nomadic intermediary could become a redundant feature, or even a hindrance, in North-South communication. In the light of these general observations, the case of the Eastern Goths, and especially the so-called Ermanaric state, is a very interesting one. A political structure of this kind presaged both the *Pax Chazarica* and, considering the origin of the Gothic elites, the 'Kievan Rus'. However, the Amali dynasty differed from the Rurikids in that the latter did not locate the centre of their state on the steppe. Perhaps it was this circumstance that made Ermanaric's kingdom less resistant to the attacks of the relatively uncivilized, but highly militarily effective Huns. The strength of the Huns' short-lived empire consisted in the creation of a perfect, albeit short-lived binary system linking the barbaric Hun North with the Roman South. Yet this relationship was overly exploitative, representing, in effect, a rationalized form of plunder. There was no room in it for the mutual benefits that result from the establishment of long-distance lines of communication. It would seem that the parasitic nature of Attila's plunder-based empire pre-determined its short-lived nature. The successes of the Scythians, Khazars, Huns and, to a lesser extent, Avars, in creating vast, early political organisms were far more spectacular. The other nomadic ethne that inhabited the Black Sea steppe functioned within much simpler political structures. The Pechenegs, due to both historical circumstances and their specific form of socio-political organization, will be closer to this latter group of nomadic peoples.

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CHAPTER 3

The Earliest History of the Pechenegs

3.1 The Problem of Ethnogenesis

Very little is known about the origins of the Pechenegs. Those seeking to ascertain the time, place, and manner of their ethnogenesis have to rely on indirect data. Like most nomadic peoples, the Pechenegs first appear in the sources only after they attain a significant degree of political importance. No legendary version of their *origo* has survived, so researchers can offer only hypotheses about their origins. These hypotheses are often based on similarities between their ethnonym and that of another group found in the sources.

This was the case with Paul Pelliot's equating the Pechenegs with the Pei-ju (Beiru) people, who appear in the *Book of Sui* (Suí Shū), the official history of the Sui dynasty in China (581–618), written under the direction of Wei Zheng in 629–636.[1] In it the Pei-ju are listed as part of the T'ie-lê (Tiele) confederation, which was based in the lands east of Fu-lin (Byzantium) and probably as far west as the Caspian Sea.[2] While this identification has been recognized by some researchers,[3] it is not universally accepted.[4] In addition to philological doubts, historical premises also seem to speak against Pelliot's hypothesis. According to the information in the *Book of Sui*, the Pei-ju ought to be based in the Black Sea or Black Sea-Caspian steppe, and thus within Constantinople's sphere of interest. Therefore, if the Pechenegs were actually a tribe of the T'ie-lê confederation, they would most probably have been recorded in Byzantine historiography. However, we find no mention of them in the 7th century.

The first written information generally regarded as reliable on the Pechenegs dates to the latter half of the 8th century: a diplomatic report prepared by five agents of the 'King of the Uyghurs' contains the following information: 'Northwest of them [i.e., the *1-byil-kor* tribe] is the Pecheneg [*Be-ča-nag*] tribe,

1 Pelliot 1949, 226.

2 The full text of the mention cited here, translated into German by Liu Mau-Tsai, reads as follows: 'Östlich von Fu-lin leben die En-k'ü, A-lan, Pei-ju, Kiu-li, Fu-wu, Hun und andere mit annähernd 20 000 Mann.' Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 128.

3 Kliashtornyi 1964, 117; 2003, 226–7; Pritsak 1975, 211.

4 P.B. Golden expresses doubts about this: 1990, 271; 1992, 264; 1995, 289 Friedrich Hirth identifies them with the Buljars or Bulgars, which seems more likely. Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 569 (n. 663).

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they have five thousand warriors. They led the war against the Hor [Uyghurs].'[5] The identification of the Pechenegs with the *Be-ča-nag* tribe does not arouse much controversy among experts on the subject, nor do scholars question the authenticity of this report, written sometime between 787 and 848.[6] However, further efforts to interpret the document have been controversial. Some researchers say that the Hor tribe mentioned in the document are none other than the Uyghurs. Such an identification leads to various hypotheses about the location of the Pecheneg nomads. According to some researchers, they were located north of Lake Balkhash or in the Upper Irtysh region. Based on battles mentioned in the report, the Pechenegs were said to have migrated westwards.[7] It should be noted, however, that some scholars identify the Hors with the Oghuz (the Uzes in Byzantine sources), who are believed to have defeated the Pechenegs and driven them from their settlements on the lower Syr Darya River and the Aral Sea.[8]

This last hypothesis shares affinities with others derived from an etymological analysis of the name 'Kangar', used to refer to some Pecheneg tribes. Information about this group's existence is provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in his *De administrando imperio*, where he mentions them three times. The first occurrence coming near the end of Chapter 37:

> The Pechenegs are also called 'Kangar', though not all of them, but only the folk of the three provinces of Iabdierti and Kouartzitzour and Chabouxingyla, for they are more valiant and noble than the rest: and that is what the title 'Kangar' signifies.[9]

In the next chapter, the learned emperor adds:

> [...] the Pechenegs [...] were previously called 'Kangar' (for this 'Kangar' was a name signifying nobility and valour among them) [...]. And when battle was joined between the Turks and the Pechenegs who were at that

5 Bacot 1956, 143 (original), 147 (French translation). English translation: Zimonyi 2016, 68.

6 Tryjarski 1975a, 492.

7 Clauson 1957, 16; Tryjarski 1975a, 504; Senga 1992, 503–516. The supposed time of their migration westward was before the year 821. Senga 1992, 508–509.

8 Kliashtornyi 1964, 177–178; 2003, 227; Pritsak 1975, 215; Golden 1990, 271; 1995, 289.

9 DAI, XXXVIII 68–71 (p. 170/171). '[...] Κάγγαρ ὀνομάζονται οἱ Πατζακῖαι, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάντες, πλὴν ὁ τῶν τριῶν θεμάτων λαός, τοῦ 'Ιαβδιηρτὶ καὶ τοῦ Κουαρτζιτζοὺρ καὶ τοῦ Χαβουξιγγυλά, ὡς ἀνδρειότεροι καί εὐγενέστεροι τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦτο γὰρ δηλοῖ ἡ τοῦ Κάγγαρ προσηγορία.'

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> time called 'Kangar', the army of the Turks was defeated and split into two parts.[10]

The Byzantine monarch's mid-10th-century text contains two very important pieces of information for interpreting the name 'Kangar'. The first is the particular qualities he assigns to the three Pecheneg tribes. These three tribes probably dominated over the whole ethnos. The second is the clear emphasis in the *De administrando imperio* on the long history of the name (Chapter 38). 'Kangar' is said to have been the name of an entire confederation of tribes before they began to be called the *Be-ča-nag*. Both the continuity in the ethnic tradition and the changes it underwent are important here, as the new ethnonym may be an indicator of major changes taking place in the group's political structure.

The information provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, and especially the information about the Pechenegs' former ethnonym, have fueled a great deal of speculation among scholars. It was believed, for example, that it would be possible to find the forebears of the Pechenegs among ethne with similar names. Such research sometimes focused less on the ethnos and more on the ethnonym. The given name 'Kangar' was known to the late 5th-century Armenian author Lazar Parpetsi. In addition, it is found in two Syrian martyrologies from the latter half of the sixth century.[11] On the basis of this information, Karoly Czeglédy concluded that the lands of the *Kangar* were located in the Caucusus between the Kura River and Lake Sevan, on the border between Albania and Iberia (Georgia).[12] The *Kangar* ethnonym is associated with the word **kānk* ('stone') from Tocharian A ('East Tocharian'). Based on this, Omeljan Pritsak concluded that the *Kangar* were originally inhabitants of Tashkent ('stone city') and the surrounding area. The Ukrainian researcher also links them to the people of K'ang-chü (Kangju), who were classified as Tocharians by Chinese sources from the Han Dynasty era (2nd century BCE). This tribal union was said to be comprised of two different, but complementary tribal groups. One consisted of nomads, the creators of great steppe empires (e.g., the great Yuezhi [Yüeh-chih], founders of the Kushan state), while the other were inhabitants of oasis towns where the primary means of support was

10 DAI, XXXVIII 19–21, 24–26 (p. 170/171). 'Οἱ δὲ Πατζινακῖται, οἱ πρὸτερον Κάγγαρ ἐπονομαζὸμενοι (τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ Κάγγαρ ὄνομα ἐπ' εὐγενείᾳ καὶ ἀνδρείᾳ ἐλέγετο παρ' αὐτοῖς), [...]. Ἀναμεταξὺ δὲ τῶν Τούρκων συναφθέντος πολέμου καὶ τῶν Πατζινακιτν, τῶν τηνικαὰτῶα Κάγγαρ ἐπονομαζομένων, τὸ τῶν Τούρκων φοσσᾶτον ἠττὴθη καὶ εἰς δύο διῃρέθη μέρη'.

11 Czeglédy 1954, 14–45; 1954a, 65–66; 1956, 243–276.

12 Cf. Kliashtornyi 1964, 175–176; 2003, 225; Pritsak 1975, 211–212.

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trade. The two groups were connected not only by a shared language, but also by trade relations and shared common interests. Pritsak concludes that the *Kangar* were initially merchants and residents of towns along the Syr Darya River (mainly Tashkent). With time they formed an alliance with Turkic tribes and took their 'political name' from them.[13]

The name 'Kangar' has also been associated with the *Käŋgäräs*, who are mentioned in an inscription honouring Kül Tegin from the early 8th century.[14] Based on its content, it has been established that around 713 the *Käŋgäräs* were attacked by the *Türgäsh*, who incited an uprising against the Orkhon Turks. Some researchers consider the *Käŋgäräs* to have been allies of this latter group and place their settlements on the Syr Darya and the Aral Sea.[15] Additional evidence for this location was provided by Josef Marquart, a German researcher who noticed that the Syr Darya in its lower and middle sections was referred to as the *Käŋgär* or *Känkär* by medieval Muslim authors. The ethnonym 'Kengeres' should therefore be interpreted as *Käŋgär-as*, 'people of the Kangar River'.[16] Marquardt also tried to connect the Pechenegs with the Kengeres based on another premise, one provided by al-Masudi, an Arab historian writing in the 10th century. In one of his works, al-Masudi relates the reasons for the migration of four Turkic tribes, including the Pechenegs, and the Magyars to the west, as well as 'the wars and invasions that occurred between them and the Oghuz, Karluks and Kimäks on the Jurjān Sea [Aral Sea].'[17] The events referred to here are usually dated to the 9th century; however, there is a lack of agreement about a more detailed chronology.[18] For our purposes, of greatest importance is the fact that Marquart considered al-Masudi's relation to be confirmation of the Pechenegs' presence in the environs of the Aral Sea and Syr Darya.[19] However, al-Masudi's account cannot be treated as evidence in support of this thesis. The fact that warfare was waged in the Aral Sea region does not automatically mean that any of the peoples involved had settlements nearby. Likewise, aspirations to extend control over an area of the steppe cannot automatically be equated with the expansion of an area of settlement. The history of the political organisms created by nomads provides many examples demonstrating the potential for a decoupling of these two phenomena. Moreover, it seems that al-Masudi could have referred to the Jurjān Sea

13 Pritsak 1975, 212–213.
14 Thomsen 1924, 152–153; Malov 1951, 32 (transcription of Old Turkish text), 41 (translation).
15 Marquart 1898, 10; 1914, 35, 99; Kliashtoryi 1964, 162–3; 2003, 211, 213.
16 Marquart 1914, 26; 1898, 10–11; Golden 1972, 58; 1990, 271–272; 1995, 289.
17 al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb*, s. 180–181. Cf. Golden 1972, 58–59 (n. 52).
18 Cf. below.
19 Cf. also Kliashtornyi 1964, 164–5, 177–179; 2003, 227–8.

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merely as a point of reference. The battles described could have taken place in its immediate vicinity or more distant from it, somewhere on the steppe of today's central Kazakhstan.

The ethnonym *Kängäräs* figured into Pritsak's hypothesis as well, but he proposed a different interpretation in which the term contains two separate elements. The first is the previously-mentioned Tocharian word **kānk-*, while the latter has its source in the name of the Aorsi ('Aorsoi=*ãvrs->ārs->ās'), an East-Iranian tribe. Since the first component was rendered in Turkic as a pre-syllabic word, the vocalism of the second component was governed by the principle of apophony (Umlaut). According to Pritsak, the ethnonym *Kängäräs* should therefore be interpreted as **Kängär As*, meaning 'stone *Ās* [people]', which he said indicated that around the eighth century they were associated with the Alani-Asi confederation.[20]

Pritsak also states that following the collapse of the Orkhon Turk (Tujue) empire (744), ethnic shifts in Central Asia forced the Pechenegs to migrate to the Transvolga region. By the mid-8th century, the Uyghurs had achieved hegemony on the Inner Asian steppe. In a punitive expedition following an earlier insurrection, their allies the Karluks attacked the Oghuz Turks, who lived in north-east Mongolia. The latter were forced to leave their settlements and migrate to environs of the upper Syr Darya and the Aral Sea, where their settlements neighboured those of the Pechenegs. It was here that the clashes mentioned in the 'Report of the Five Hors' are said to have taken place, forcing the migration of the Pechenegs. The Oghuz sought to wrest from the Pechenegs control of this area, which was a valuable region in terms of trade. The Pechenegs, whose nucleus was comprised of *Kangar*, who had inhabited oasis towns and engaged in the trade of goods for centuries, were defeated and forced to leave their settlements and relocate them on the steppe of today's western Kazakhstan, which led to a radical change in their lifestyle. From this time on, the Pechenegs would live as typical nomads. Pritsak dates these events to the early 9th century. The next clash between these ethne is believed to have taken place around the year 830. This time the Pechenegs, having crossed the Volga, moved onto the Black Sea steppe.[21]

Peter B. Golden assumed a version of accidents very similar to those proposed by Pritsak. In his opinion, the Pechenegs were descendants of an earlier wave of Turkic peoples who led a pastoral way of life and settled around the Iranian cities of Transoxania (Mā warāʾ an-Nahr). The area was known to Chinese sources under the name *K'ang-chü*. An influx of additional Turkic groups

20 Pritsak 1975, 213.

21 Pritsak 1975, 214–216.

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began in the 6th century, leading to a gradual process of Turkification of the area's Iranian inhabitants. Also moving into the area were the Pechenegs, who Golden identifies with the *Käŋgäräs* people and places in the area of the town of Käŋgü Tarban on the Syr Darya.[22] Conflicts with the Karluk, Kimek (Kimäk), and, above all, Oghuz peoples led to the forced exodus of the Pechenegs from this area. The works of the 11th-century Iranian writer al-Biruni contain valuable information relating to this period.[23] Basing his claims on earlier sources, he writes that the Pechenegs inhabited the Aral Sea region, while in another work he states that their settlements neighboured those of the Karluks. Golden additionally refers to Oghuz folklore, in which the memory of wars with the *It-Bäčänä* (Pecheneg-Dogs) has been preserved.[24] In a work by Abu-l-Gazi, a khan of the Khanate of Khiva who reigned in the 17th century, we find information about battles between one of the Oghuz tribes (Sal'or) and the Pechenegs. If these colourful and semi-legendary stories are based on real events, then they should be dated (according to most researchers) to the 9th century. It is not possible to determine the time and place of these conflicts more precisely, though from Abu al-Gazi's account, it is clear that the Pechenegs were on the victorious side.

Based on this evidence, Golden concluded that the Pechenegs were driven from their lands on the Syr Darya due to ethnic displacements in the first third of the 9th century caused by wars fought between the Karluks and the Uyghurs – and later, the Kyrgyz (Kirghiz). This led to the collapse of the Uyghurs (840), hitherto the dominant force in the eastern part of the Great Steppe. According to Golden, the effects of these migrations were not limited only to Inner Asia. Waves of ethnic migration not only led to the appearance of the Oghuz, Kimaks and Karluks on the Syr Darya and forced the Pechenegs to flee to the west, but also led the Magyars to leave Bashkiria and move onto the Black Sea steppe (840–41). These events, he says, forced the Khazars to build an extensive system of fortifications of which Sarkel was only a part. They also contributed to the Byzantine Empire's reengagement along the northern shores of Pontos, as evidenced by the construction of not only the above-mentioned fortress, but also the city of Kherson.[25]

Golden's hypotheses deserves a closer, more critical look, as the Pechenegs' presence in the environs of the Aral Sea and the lower and middle Syr Darya

22 Golden thus follows the consensus among Russian scholars: Kliashtornyi 1964, 164–165; 2003, 228; Romashov 1999, 21.

23 Biruni, 95–6.

24 Abu-l-Gazi, 56, 71, 73–74. Cf. Zhirmunskii 1962, 181–187; Golden 1972, 58–59.

25 Golden 1972, 59–68. Cf. Zuckerman 1997, 214.

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has not been definitively confirmed. In spite of his laudable efforts to explain the causes of nomadic migrations and show their connection to events in the 9th century that involved directly or indirectly almost every significant political organism on the Great Steppe, the arguments Golden puts forward seem less than convincing. First, the chronological premises underlying his concept are not based on hard facts. It is difficult to link the construction of the Sarkel fortress (in the 830s) with the migrations that are said to have led to the collapse of the Uyghur state. Moreover, the reasons for the Khazar Khaganate's building the fortress are not entirely clear. They need not have been, or at least not only have been, motivated by a desire to hold back the Magyars or other peoples. Golden's identification of the Pecheneg *Kangar*, and of the Pechenegs themselves with the Orkhon *Käŋgäräs*, is even more questionable. In principle, the only argument for such an identification, apart from similarities in the two ethnonyms, is the proximity of the homelands of these peoples in the 8th century, a question that remains largely speculative. Likewise, the alleged link between the *Käŋgäräs* and the Alan-As confederation proposed by Pritsak has not gained wide acceptance. It is also difficult, as György Györffy has argued, to positively identify the Pecheneg as the Caucasian *Kangar* found in Armenian and Syrian sources.[26] However, the most serious reservations concern the theory that the Pechenegs have their origins in an East Iranian ethnos. The problem here is not the idea that within one tribal union there would be two groups with different origins, because such phenomena certainly occurred.[27] Rather, what is hard to imagine here is that, in accordance with the hypothesis presented above, the semi-nomadic or fully settled inhabitants of an oasis town would have so suddenly adopted a nomadic way of life and so quickly come to lead a steppe-based tribal organization. Sergei Kliashtornyi has noted a number of difficulties that would have resulted from such a rapid cultural change – one that would have required adapting to radically different natural conditions.[28] This is how he explains the presence of the so-called *yatak* ['indolent'] social class among the Oghuz Turks, as testified by Mahmud al-Kashgari. This was the name applied to members of an ethnos who did not go to war or live a nomadic lifestyle.[29] According to Kliashtornyi, the *yatak* were semi-nomadic Pechenegs, the inhabitants of oasis towns who were unable to adapt to life on the steppe.

26 Györffy 1978, 123–126; Kristó 1996, 140–141.

27 Cf. Wenskus 1961.

28 Kliashtornyi 1951, 61.

29 al-Kāšgarī III 11. Cited from: Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 146.

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However, this explanation is less than satisfactory. If we take into account the *Kangar* origins proposed by some scholars for the Pechenegs, in particular Pritsak, then we have to conclude that they were largely predestined to become *yatak*. Given this situation, it is hard to imagine that they could have led an entire people and, moreover, make claims to their noble origins and military valour. Claims to the complete Turkification of the *Kangar* also raises serious doubts. Among the relics of the Pecheneg language (though it is true that not much of it has survived), words of Turkic origin clearly dominate. Statements made about the Pechenegs by authors of their time confirm this fact. Anna Komnena states that the Pechenegs spoke the same language as the Cumans.[30] Mahmud al-Kashgari, on the other hand, considers their language to be a corrupted form of Turkic. Most contemporary researchers also conclude that they spoke a Common Turkic language.[31] A question then arises as to whether such a sudden and complete process of Turkification could have taken place in an ethnos whose elites would have been of foreign descent. This possibility cannot be ruled out, as the history of the Danube Bulgars and Varangians in Rus' seems to indicate.[32] However, such an assimilation process is always a lengthy one and traces of former ethnic differences remain.

Finally, the above hypotheses only have relevance if the word 'kangar' is treated as a foreign word or ethnonym. Meanwhile, research has proven that its etymology can potentially be derived from Turco-Mongol languages. The word 'kangar' therefore could in fact correspond to the Turkic word *qïngïr*, meaning 'stubborn, firm, courageous, brave'.[33] Such an interpretation would confirm Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' information about the name's ennobling aspect. An interesting etymological analysis was presented by Karl H. Menges, who argued that 'kangar' could be derived from the word *qan*, which is considered an abbreviated version of *khan* or *khagan*. This would give it the following lexical structure: *qan* + noun suffix *-gar*, and, corresponding to the Turkic *qangar*, the meaning 'royal', 'ruling', or 'those close to the ruler'. Menges evokes an analogy with the Royal Scythians of Herodotus.[34] It is known that this type of titular was used in reference to dominant elements in other Iranian tribal unions. Was the same true of the Turkic Pechenegs? This cannot be ruled out.

30 An.Kom., VIII 5.6 (pp. 247–248).

31 Golden 1995, 290.

32 Halperin 2007, 84–98: Halperin provides interesting comments on the assimilation of the elites into an ethnic environment foreign to them. The process may have been quite lengthy due to deliberate resistance on the part of the ruling social group, since maintaining their political dominance depended on them preserving their distinct identity.

33 Moravcsik 1983a, 145.

34 Menges 1944–45, 270–271.

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Menges' interpretation is appealing, but, as the author himself has pointed out, it is only one of a number of possibilities.

In the light of current research, the Pechenegs' origins thus remain uncertain. They began to be noticed as an independent people by outside observers no earlier than the mid-8th century. At that time they were based somewhere on the steppe of today's eastern or central Kazakhstan (Aral Sea region). More detailed interpretations of extant sources would be merely hypothetical in nature, and any effort to reconcile them would by necessity entail arbitrary speculation. After their defeat by the Hors, the Pechenegs may have migrated from Lake Balkhash or the upper areas of the Irtysh River to the steppe north of the lower and middle Syr Darya. The choice of such a route can be justified based on both geographical and economic considerations, as the nomadic Pechenegs would have been naturally drawn to the rich oasis towns of Central Asia. Yet such an interpretation, though plausible, is little more than informed speculation. It is just as easy to assume that at the dawn of their history the Pechenegs were already residing on the Syr Darya, or, more likely, on the steppe stretching north of the river and the Aral Sea.

Their ethnogenesis is likely to have come after the break-up of the Western Turkic Khanate. At that time, no single Turkic tribe exercised hegemonic control over the Great Steppe. Up until the end of the 7th century, this area belonged to China, which ruled it with the help of Turkic vassals. However, in 679 a large horde (*orda*) of Göktürks (Blue Turks) left the steppe of Ordos, travelled north and began to form what became the Göktürk Khanate. They were decidedly hostile to the Chinese empire, and their arrival was considered a moment of liberation by the inhabitants of the western zones of the Great Steppe. Constant threats to the northern boundary of the Middle Kingdom would limit its ability to interfere politically in the region. This state of affairs was further exacerbated the growing importance of Tibet, which beginning in the early 7th century would become a dangerous enemy of China.[35] It can thus be said that in the early 8th century the steppe between Dzungaria and the Volga region became a place of freedom for smaller ethne, unable to impose their rule on their neighbours, like the Khazars on the lower and middle Volga and the Black Sea steppe, or the Blue Turks in the eastern areas of the Great

35 The rivalry between China and Tibet started during the reign of King Namri (570–620). It reached its apex, however, in the second half of the 7th century. Although China ultimately triumphed, the more than century-long conflict considerably weakened the position of the Middle Kingdom on the Great Steppe. Gumilev 1993, 250–258; Hoffman 1990, 376–382.

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Steppe.[36] It was during this period that the Pechenegs may have emerged as an independent political entity.

Analysis of their ethnonym yields some interesting facts. The word 'pecheneg' is generally assumed to mean 'wife's sister's husband, brother-in-law'.[37] The term is thus said to prove that the Pechenegs, and in particular, their elites, belonged to the 'brother-in-law' clans, which occupied a high position within the imperial political structures of the Great Steppe (Tur. *el*/*il*) and had close ties to the ruling clan.[38] Pritsak sees a clear link between the Pechenegs and the Ashina dynasty, which ruled the Turkic Khaganates (552–744).[39] Such an interpretation is not unfounded, but it poses questions about the branch of the Ashina clan with which the Pechenegs elite is said to have had such close relations. One is also tempted to associate them with the Göktürk dynasty, which in the last decades of the 7th century began rebuilding the Eastern Khanate. If the Hor mentioned in the above-mentioned diplomatic report were in fact Uyghurs, this would also help explain their hostile relations with the Pechenegs. As the Göktürks' conquerors and successors, they would have aroused the ire of that group's close allies. However, we know that the Hors can also be identified with the Oghuz Turks. In this case, the *Be-ča-nag* would have enjoyed close contacts with the dynasties of the declining Western Turkic Khanate. One conclusion can be positively drawn from these suppositions: in the 8th century the Pechenegs may have already enjoyed significant political importance in the lands between the Transvolga region and Dzhungaria.

3.2 Pechenegs on the Transvolgan Steppe

More detailed information about the Pechenegs exists concerning the period when they lived on the Transvolgan Steppe. It is difficult to say exactly when they arrived in this area, likewise with the cause of their migration. However, it can be cautiously assumed that it took place in the second third of the

36 A state of relative freedom and rivalry among smaller ethne on the western stretches of the Great Steppe would continue for another few centuries. In 8th and 9th centuries, the Karluks, who originally inhabited the area between the western part of the Altai Mountains and the Irtysh River, had their greatest period of significance. Their dominance was brought to an end by the Samanids in late 9th century, which led to a series of ethnic shifts. Kałużyński 1986, 61–62; Golden 1990a, 348–354; Tryjarski 1975a, 504.

37 Pritsak 1975, 211; Schamiloglu 1984, 215–222; Bazin 1986, 73. A different opinion was held by Doerfer 1965, 233.

38 Pritsak 1952, 52, 79; 1988, 749–780.

39 Pritsak 1975, 211.

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9th century,[40] perhaps under pressure from other Turkic tribes mentioned in al-Masudi's account.[41] However, it cannot be ruled out that the nomads were attracted by the area's proximity to the affluent Khazar Khaganate and the desire to profit from the dynamic expansion of trade along the Volga River.

More detailed information on the location of the Pechenegs' nomadic settlements can be found in the writings of al-Gardīzī, al-Bakrī, and al-Marwazī, i.e., Muslim authors whose works provide information from a lost 9th-century source, known as *The Anonymous Account*.[42] The first two of these authors state that after leaving Jurjāniyyah (i.e., Urgench), a city located in the Khwārazm region[43] and covering a distance of 12 *parasangs*, you reached what was called Khwārazm Mountain.[44] This was probably one of the peaks of the Ustyurt Plateau.[45] Gardīzī adds that once you reached Khwārazm Lake, you continued along its shore, keeping it to your right side. The author here is probably talking about the Aral Sea, and thus confirming the identification of the above-mentioned elevation. Gardīzī also states that during the journey, you passed through a waterless steppe (Ustyurt Plateau), and on the ninth day of your travel you would reach a spring where there were numerous animals. On the seventeenth day of the journey, you finally reach the areas controlled by the Pechenegs.[46] We can therefore assume, on the basis of Gardīzī's report, supplemented by information from al-Bakrī, that the Pechenegs' encampments were located beyond the Ustyurt Plateau, and seven days' travel north-west of them. The last conclusion is based on the following premise. If the Pechenegs inhabited areas located due north of Ustyurt, then their nomadic settlements would be located on the southern slopes of the Urals. However, in al-Bakrī we read:

40 Łowmiański 1973, 61–62; Lewicki 1977, 12; Gumilev 1993, 375. Łowmiański claimed that the Pechenegs' camps had already reached the lower Volga in the mid-8th century. A similar opinion is held by A. Róna-Tas (1999, 235). He believes that the Pechenegs were already present on the Yaik and Volga rivers at the time when the 'Report of the 5 Hors' was being prepared, and that this is where their original homeland should be located.

41 Cf. footnote 17 above.

42 Cf. the introductory chapter of the present book.

43 It is usually identified as present-day Kunja Urgenč, a town located on the lower Amu Darya, about 30 km from present-day Nukus. Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 163 (n. 384).

44 Gardīzī: Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 162–164; Martinez 1982, 151. Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 58–9; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 221. Zachoder 1967, 71.

45 For more on the identification of Khwarezmian Mountain: Minorsky 1937, 314 (n. 1); Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 163 (n. 385). On the identification of other geographical terms: Tryjarski 1975a, 507.

46 A different opinion was held by V. Bartol'd (1897, 119–120), who, based on data from Gardīzī's account, initially estimated that Urgench was a 27-day journey from the Pecheneg lands. In a later work, he revised his estimates and shortened the distance to a journey of 17 days. Bartol'd 1963, 820. Cf. Zakhoder 1967, 71.

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'The country of the Pechenegs is completely flat. There is neither mountain there nor stronghold to take refuge in it.'[47]

We can thus tentatively posit that in all probability they inhabited the steppe between the Volga and the Emba River.[48] More precise information on the homelands of the Pechenegs in the 9th century can be found in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' *De administrando imperio*. In the chapter discussing events connected with the Pechenegs' leaving the Volga region, it states:

> Originally, the Pechenegs had their dwelling on the river Atil, and likewise on the river Geïch, having common frontiers with the Chazars and the so-called Uzes.[49]

On the basis of this reference, some researchers assumed that the territory of the Pechenegs lay between the Volga and the Ural rivers.[50] Such an interpretation is not entirely convincing. While the fact that the Pechenegs' nomadic settlements (due to their proximity to the Khazar's trading empire) could not have been located on the right bank of the Volga is undisputable, we cannot talk about their border with the Ohguz (Uzes) with a similar level of certainty. This is definitely not offered by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' claim that the Pechenegs lived 'likewise on the river Geïch' (ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν Γεήχ). The thesis that they lived on the right side of the river is only one possible interpretation; the Pechenegs just as easily could have ruled over both banks of the river. It is worth considering this possibility, especially if we take into account the evidence we have indicating such was the case. Ahmed ibn Fadlan, a member of the embassy of Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir to the ruler of the Volga-Kama Bulgars, noted during a journey in the spring of 922 the existence of impoverished Pechenegs in the Transvolga.[51] The decidedly anti-Khazar nature of his mission forced ibn Fadlan to take a route far from the Khazars' lands. Therefore, not only did he not cross the Volga, but in the lower

47 Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Zakhoder 1967, 75; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. English translation Zimonyi 2013, 102 (note 10).

48 A similar location, but without supporting evidence, was given by Tadeusz Lewicki (1970, 85–86).

49 'Ιστέον, ὅτι οἱ Πατζινακῖται τὸ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν Ἀτὴλ τὴν αὐτῶν εἶχον κατοίκησιν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν Γεήχ, ἔχοντες τούς τε Χαζάρους συνοροῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἐπονομαζομένους Οὔζους'. DAI, XXXVII 2–4 (p. 166/167).

50 Such an interpretation was adopted by Macartney 1929, 343. Likewise: S.A. Pletneva 1958, 154, fig. 1; Varady 1982, 26.

51 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 212; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 33; Kovalevskii 1956, 130; Frye 2005, 42.

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and middle course of the river, he steered clear of the valley of the Volga in general. A similar thesis, combined with information that these Pechenegs inhabited an area by some 'non-flowing' lake, gave reason to locate them in the area of Shalkar Lake near Oral (Rus. Ural'sk).[52] It is especially important to remember that this place was located on the left bank of the Ural river, not far from the area where it turns sharply to the south and directs its course towards the Caspian Sea. Of course, it can be suggested that between the moment when the main part of the Pechenegs left the Volga region and Ahmed ibn Fadlan wrote his notes, ethnic shifts occurred which ultimately forced weaker tribal groups to cross the Yaik (Ural) River. It seems unlikely, however, that such circumstances existed.

The Pechenegs' nomadic settlements could therefore also have extended east of the Ural River. Such an assumption is further reinforced by the mention in Arab sources from the al-Jayhānī tradition that the Pechenegs' territory stretched over the equivalent of 30 days' travel.[53] This is a huge area. Even if we believe that the ratio proposed by Tadeusz Lewicki for converting travel days into distances measured in kilometres is exaggerated,[54] it still seems unlikely that such a large territory would be located between the Volga and the Yaik-Ural. This is all the more difficult to believe when we take into account the fact that after losing in their rivalry with the Khazars and Oghuz (Uzes), and after experiencing demographic losses that are difficult to estimate, but no less important, the Pechenegs still managed to control large nomadic settlements on the Black Sea steppe, stretching, according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, from the Khazar's fortress in Sarkel on the Don to the Lower Danube.

Thus, if the Pechenegs' encampments were also located on the left bank of the Ural, how far east could they have stretched? This question is extremely difficult to answer. However, it seems that given the nomads' attachment to their natural environment, such as the steppe and forest steppe, it can be assumed that the pastures of the Pechenegs were limited by the south-eastern slopes of the Urals and their extensions, the Mugodzhar Hills.[55]

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52 ibn Fadlan: Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 33 (n. 5); Kovalevskii 1956, 192 (n. 308). Tryjarski 1975a, 513.

53 Gardīzī: Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 164; Martinez 1982, 151. Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 221. Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 32–33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250. Zakhoder 1967, 71.

54 T. Lewicki estimates that at an average speed, caravans travelled about 30 kilometers per day in this area. This means that the Pechenegs' encampments stretched over an area of 900 kilometers in both width and length. Lewicki 1977, 67.

55 Cf. Zimonyi 2013, 287–301.

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This series of uncertainties also includes the problem of the peoples neighbouring the Pechenegs. According to Muslim accounts, their neighbours included the Khazars, Oghuz, Kipchaks, and Slavs (as-Sakaliba, Saqlab). The first two ethne have already been mentioned in the discussion of the accounts of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who considered them to be one of the Pechenegs' neighbours at the end of the 9th century.[56] Islamic writers differ about the direction in which these two ethne bordered the Pechenegs. According to al-Bakrī, the Khazars inhabited areas south of the Pechenegs, while al-Marwazī and al-Gardīzī place them to the southwest. The latter version is probably closer to the truth. In the case of the Oghuz (Uzes), there is agreement between al-Bakrī and al-Marwazī, who both say they lived on the steppe to the east of the Pechenegs. Al-Gardīzī makes no mention of them. The Kipchaks, also referred to as the Cumans or in Slavic as the *Polovtsy*, were said to occupy areas either to the east (al-Gardīzī) or north (al-Marwazī, al-Bakrī) of the Pechenegs.[57] Al-Gardīzī's version should be completely rejected, as he seems to have mistaken the Kipchaks for the Oghuz, and hence, the lack of information about the group in his writings. However, the information provided by the other two writers also needs to be corrected. Since we know that in the latter half of the 9th century, the Kipchaks had nomadic settlements in the forest-steppe areas between the Irtysh and Tobol Rivers,[58] their westernmost borders could have reached at most to the southern slopes of the Urals, and this is most probably the area where their lands bordered those of the Pechenegs. Therefore, the border between these two peoples ran northeast.

However, the greatest controversy seems to concern the Slavs in their environs. Although there is a consensus among Arab authors that Slavs occupied the territories west of the Pechenegs' encampments, the situation is less clear in relation to the Transvolga. As a result, some researchers are inclined to assume that these references are to the Volga-Kama Bulgars. The basis for a similar revision is that Ahmed ibn Fadlan, who lived among the Bulgars, called them *as-Saqaliba*, a name previously reserved for Slavs.[59] However, this is

56 DAI, XXXVII 2–4 (p. 167/168).

57 Gardīzī: Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 164; Martinez 1982, 151. Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 221. Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 32–33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250. Zakhoder 1967, 72–73.

58 Gumilow 1973, 82; Kumekov 1972, 56–7.

59 Tryjarski 1975a, 507 (n. 98). The ethnonym Ṣaqlab or Ṣaqāliba is found relatively often in Arabic texts and may be understood more generally as a *nomen collectivum* for the peoples inhabiting the forests and forest steppe zones of the lower and middle Volga River. Cf. Marquart 1903, 466f.; Zimonyi 1990, 149–150; Nazmi 1998, 73–113; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 165 (n. 390).

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not the only possible revision. The British scholar Carlile Aylmer Macartney assumes these references are to the Burtas.[60] A number of important pieces of information about them can be found in the writings of ibn Rusta. He writes, for example, that:

> The lands of the Burdās (Burtās) are located between the lands of the Khazars and those of the Bulkār (Bulghār). They are fifteen days' march from the land of the Khazars. They obey the King of the Khazars and supply him with 10,000 horsemen. […] Their lands are vast and they live in forests. They periodically raid the territories of the Bulkār and the Pečeneg. They are valiant and brave. […] Their territory is seventeen days' march in length and breadth.

And further:

> The Bulkār (Bulghār) border the lands of the Burdās (Burtās). They are camped on the bank of a river that flows into the Khazar Sea (Caspian), which is called the Itil (Volga). They live between the Khazars and the Saqāliba.[61]

The Bulkār who appear in ibn Rusta's account are Kama-Volga Bulgars. It is possible to situate the Burtas more precisely thanks to the work of T. Lewicki, who used information from ibn Rusta's writings and al-Iṣṭahrī's *itinerarium* to determine the location of the southern border of their territory, which lay in the area of today's city of Saratov. His determinations are supported by a description of the Burtas' land as being in close range of forests and forest-steppe. We know that today the transition zone between the steppe and the forest-steppe stretches runs along the line of latitude where Saratov is found. The northern boundary of their territory, according to T. Lewicki's findings, was located in the area of today's Kuibyshev; in the east it was supposed to reach as far as the Volga.[62] Taking into account the arguments given to support the location presented above, it must be admitted that C.A. Macartney's proposal rests on a stronger body of sources.

60 Macartney 1968, 26. The author assumes that mentions of the Slavs, rather than the Burtās, among the Pechenegs' neighbours was the result of a revision made by later editors.

61 Rusta: ibn Rusta, 29, 31; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 56, 57. English translation: Lunde, Stone 2012, 118, 120.

62 Lewicki 1977, 66–68; Zakhoder 1962, 230–238.

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The information provided by ibn Rusta allows us to speculate about the existence of some type of neighbourly relations between the Pechenegs and the Magyars when both tribes were still in the Volga region. We read in his work that:

> Between the country of the Pečenegs and Iskil (Askel), which belongs to the Bulkār (Bulghār), lies the first of the Magyar frontiers.[63]

It is not easy to find a convincing interpretation of this information. It seems worth considering that before their arrival on the Black Sea steppe, the Magyar tribes could have inhabited an area of the Volga region in close proximity to the Pechenegs. Archaeological discoveries from the vicinity of the town of Ufa and the valley of the Belaia River, as well as to the south, in the lower reaches of the Kama, seem to confirm the assumption that these regions could have been inhabited by Magyars from the eighth century to the first half of the ninth century.[64] Therefore, ibn Rusta's account would not seem to be an incomprehensible phantasmagoria, an issue that will be of particular importance when considering the later relations between these two peoples. At this point, it can only be stated that they could have lived adjacent to each other in the vicinity of the upper reaches of the Belaia River.

To sum up, it can be stated that the neighbours of the Pechenegs were: to the north and north-east, the Kipchaks and perhaps until their migration to the Black Sea steppe the Magyars, to the south-west and west the Khazars and the Burtas, and to the east, in the region of the Mugodzhar Hills, the Oghuz (Uzes).

A separate problem is the issue of the relations between the Pechenegs and their neighbours. If we believe Muslim authors, they were as bad as possible.

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63 Rusta: ibn Rusta, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 64–66. English translation: Lunde, Stone 2012, 122.

64 Dąbrowska 1979, 156–157; Fodor 1982, 210–217. Such an interpretation raises objections among many scholars. Marquart (1903, 515) deemed Ibn Rusta's account be a form of scholarly mystification. The Arabic writer supposedly associated Magyars with the Bashkirs, who in his day inhabited the northern Transvolga (present-day Ufa), based on similarities in their ethnonyms. This opinion was shared by Zimonyi 1990, 150–152. Kristó (1996, 105, 170) considered Ibn Rusta's data trustworthy, but he applied it to the second half of the 9th century, when Hungarians had already arrived on the Black Sea steppe. This prompted him to search for some kind of land passage that would connect the Transvolga region with the Magyars' encampments on the Black Sea, which at the same time, would have allowed them to establish contacts with the Pechenegs. This hypothesis seems rather artificial and unconvincing. Cf. Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 66–7 (n. 80); Zimonyi 2014, 123–163; 2016, 82; Spinei 2003, 39–40.

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Al-Marwazī writes: 'These peoples [the Khazars, Kipchaks, Uzes, and most likely the Burtas – A.P.] all raid the Pechenegs, who [likewise] raid them.'[65] The same is stated by al-Bakrī. Al-Gardizī adds: 'All these peoples […] they abduct them [Pechenegs – A.P.] into slavery and sell as slaves […]'.[66] However, such a state of permanent armed conflict and military oppression contrasts with the Pechenegs' wealth, to which all of the writers above testify. They are said to have possessed vast herds, large quantities of gold and silver, and expensive dishes and household appliances.[67] How can we explain this contradiction? First of all, the Pechenegs were probably one of the strongest tribal unions in the Volga region. An apparent measure of their demographic, and therefore political potential was the huge size of the territory they occupied.[68] No wonder, then, that they were probably able to effectively fend off their hostile neighbours.[69] We must also take into account the possibility that although conflicts on the Eurasian steppe were quite common, they probably differed in intensity. We should remember that the Pechenegs, who were bordered to the west by the Khazars and their vassals, also lived alongside the major trade route the ran along the Volga. They also had direct contact with the rich Khazar Empire, which may have led to a desire to participate in their trading activities, or, in the absence of such opportunities, to carry out regular looting raids. We should therefore look to the west for the front lines of their battles with their neighbours; this is all the more so given that the Khazars might have seen them as a serious threat to their interests. The main objective of the Khaganate rulers was to create the best possible conditions for the flourishing of trade, from which they earned significant profits. Instability in the area of trade routes caused by the emergence of a difficult neighbour would have greatly limited their proper functioning. Limiting the Pechenegs' aggression or eliminating competition from them posed a very important task for the Khazar elites. This

65 Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250.

66 Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59 (scholars interpret this text somewhat differently and have concluded that the Pechenegs traded with all their neighbours); Zachoder 1967, 72–3 (this includes other possible interpretations of the Arabic text); Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 221–2. Gardīzī: Zakhoder 1967, 73; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 164–5; Martinez 1982, 151 (considerably different interpretation of Gardīzī's passage: '[The Pechenegs] incite all these people[s] to raid [one another], and so they go marauding for the Pecheneg and taking captives and sell /these/').

67 Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. Gardīzī: Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 164–5; Martinez 1982, 152. Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250. Zakhoder 1967, 73–74.

68 Cf. Zimonyi 2013, 297.

69 István Zimonyi (2013, 298) interprets information about the Pechenegs fighting with neighbouring peoples as the evidence of their political independence.

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was probably the purpose of the systematic penal expeditions they carried out, which we read about in ibn Rusta's book:

> Their king [the Khazars – A.P.], the *īshā* imposes a levy of cavalry on the people of power and wealth, in accordance with their wealth and means. They raid Pečenegs every year. The *īshā* leads the expedition himself, going with his men on raids.[70]

As mentioned,[71] the Khazars had achieved hegemony on both the Black Sea steppe and the Volga region, and were thus capable of forming a coalition to keep in check the aggressive intentions of the Pechenegs. Its allies probably included the Burtas, an ethnos dependent on the Khazars; the Volga-Kama Bulgars were in a similar position of dependence until the early 10th century, so it is possible that they also took part in battles on the side of their overlords. However, it is not entirely impossible that among the primary motives for these expeditions were the abductions mentioned by Gardizī. After all, as an object of trade slaves were a potential source of income, as the Khazars knew very well. The Pechenegs' chances of gaining an upper hand on their rival grew due to an internal crisis the khaganate suffered in the mid-9th century that resulted in a civil war. We do not know much about this conflict, apart from the fact that it may have been caused by dissatisfaction among some circles of the tribal aristocracy following the introduction of political and religious reforms.[72] Ultimately, a group of three tribes known as the Kabars (Kabaroi) broke away from the Khazars and joined the Magyar tribal confederacy.[73] For our purposes, most important was the fact that this conflict led to a temporary weakening of the Khazar state, giving the Pechenegs greater freedom of action. The forced migration of the Magyars to the Black Sea steppe was probably an earlier consequence of the Pechenegs' military actions, an issue we will return to in the last part of this chapter. The Pechenegs almost certainly became more active on the Volga trade route, as the Khazars' temporary weakness provided them with better conditions for successful plunder, which became one of the sources of the wealth mentioned by Arab writers. Of course, this may also have been derived from trade with the caravans passing through their territories, but the peripheral location of the Pechenegs, as well as their universally

70 Rusta: ibn Rusta, 29; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 54. English translation: Lunde, Stone 2012, 117.

71 Cf. Chapter 2 of the present book.

72 Artamonov 1962, 324–334; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1975, 400.

73 DAI, XXXIX; XL 3–7 (p. 174/175).

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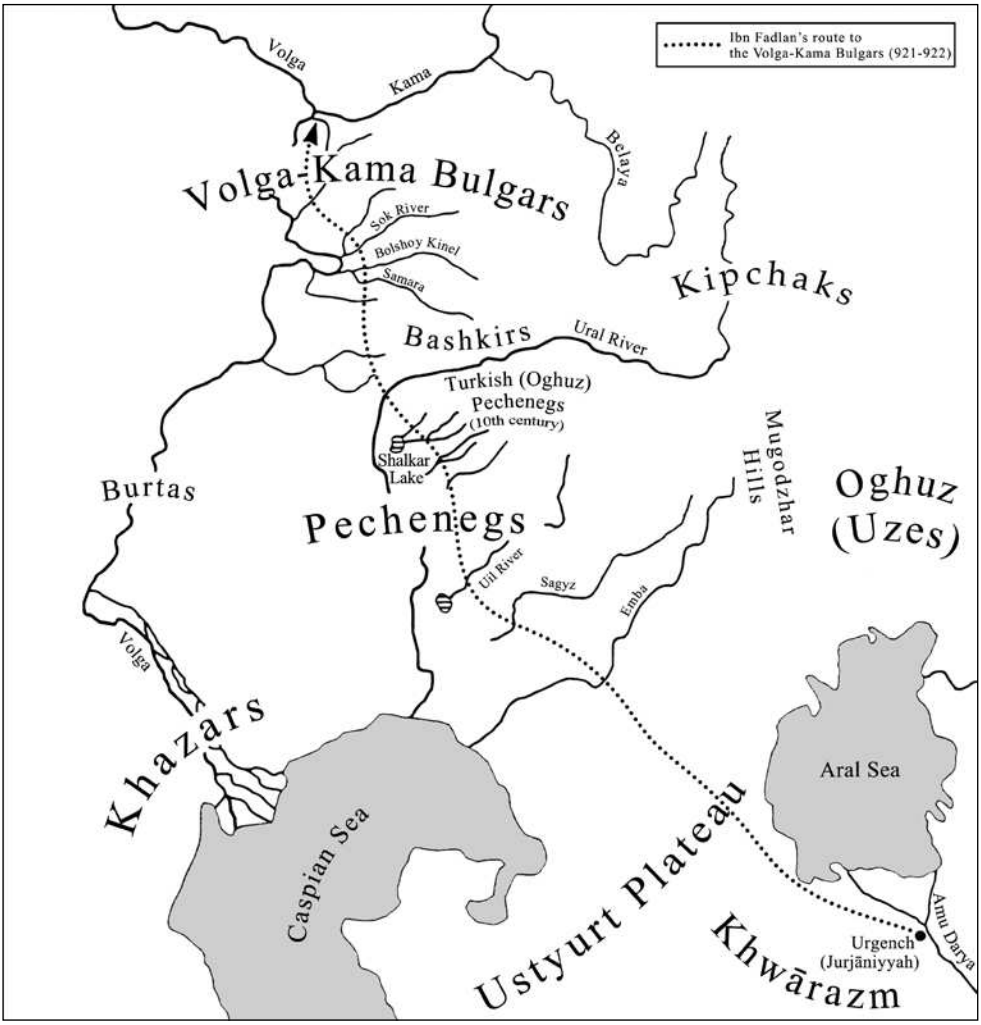

MAP 2 The Transvolga Region in the 9th century

noted warlike character, probably limited the possibilities for such types of exchange.

The arguments presented above, however, do not exclude the possibility of minor conflicts also playing out on the eastern border of the Pechenegs' nomadic settlements. It seems, however, that the rich Khazar Empire and the trade routes running through it constituted a particularly attractive area for expansion, while victories over the Pechenegs' eastern and north-eastern neighbours, who had attained a similar level of development, could not supply the Pechenegs with equally valuable loot.

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3.3 The Pechenegs' Wars with Magyars. Migration to the Black Sea Steppe

A similar state of affairs lasted until the end of the 9th century. The Khazar Khaganate was supposed to effect the removal of these troublesome neighbours from the Volga region with the help of a strong ally. Quite unexpectedly, this turned out to be the Oghuz (Uzes). Very little is known about the specific circumstances leading to the creation of this alliance directed against the Pechenegs. We owe what basic information we have about it to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. We read in Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio*:

> But fifty years ago the so-called Uzes made common cause with Chazars and joined battle with the Pechenegs and prevailed over them and expelled them from their country, which the so-called Uzes have occupied till this day.[74]

In the next chapter, the learned emperor adds:

> Now, the Pechenegs who were previously called 'Kangar' […], these, then, stirred up war against the Chazars and, being defeated, were forced to quit their own land and to settle in that of the Turks [i.e., Magyars – A.P.][75]

The first fragment seems to indicate that the political and military initiative was on the Oghuz side. It is therefore important to determine what led to an increase in the activity of this ethnos. This phenomenon is all the more puzzling because, despite their constant conflicts with the Pechenegs, as recounted in Arab sources, it was not until the end of the 9th century that the Oghuz mustered up the resources to deliver such a powerful blow to their western neighbours. The motivation for such a fierce fight should most probably be sought in the political situation that emerged on the western stretches of the Great Steppe after the creation of a Sunni empire by the Samanids. This empire, which originally inhabited Transoxania, managed to conquer much larger territories during a rapid expansion in the late 9th century. In 893, the Samanid

74 DAI, XXXVII 5–8 (p. 166/167). 'Πρὸ ἐτῶν δὲ πεντήκοντα οἱ λεγόμενοι Οὖζοι μετὰ τῶν Χαζάρων ὁμονοήσαντες καὶ πόλεμον συμβαλόντες πρὸς τοὺς Πατζινακίτας, ὑπερίσχυσαν, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας χώρας αὐτοὺς ἐξεδίωξαν, καὶ κατέσχον αὐτὴν μέχρι τῆς σήμερον οἱ λεγόμενοι Οὖζοι.'

75 DAI, XXXVIII 19–23 (p. 170/171). 'Οἱ δὲ Πατζινακῖται, οἱ πρότερον Κάγγαρ ἐπονομαζόμενοι […] πρὸς Χαζάρους οὖν οὗτοι κινήσαντες πόλεμον καὶ ἡττηθέντες, τὴν οἰκείαν γῆν καταλεῖψαι καὶ τὴν τῶν Τούρκων κατοικῆσαι κατηναγκάσθησαν.'

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ruler Ismail ibn Ahmed defeated a Turkic tribe, most probably the Karluks, who lived in Semirechie (Zhetysu), forcing them to migrate west, thus triggering other major ethnic shifts. The Karluks, in turn, attacked the Oghuz (Uzes) *en masse*, occupying their nomadic settlements, which provoked an immediate reaction on their part, because the loss of these pastures posed a serious threat to the continued existence of their people.[76] Faced with a similar threat, they decided to invade the territory of the Pechenegs. The Kimäk tribe and especially their western Kipchak group could also have been involved in these events. However, this last scenario is only possible if the clashes described by al-Masudi pitting the Magyars and Pechenegs against the Karluks, Kimäks and Uzes in the Aral Sea region can be dated to the end of the 9th century and linked to the expansion of the Samanids.[77]

At this point we are faced with a key question: was it just the Uzes or a whole coalition of peoples hostile to the Pechenegs who entered into an agreement with the Khazars? It should be noted that the question of a possible alliance remains an open question, despite Constantine VII's rather unambiguous account. There seems to have been a commonwealth of interests between the two potential partners that favoured the formation of such an alliance. The Khazars may have sought to rid themselves of an inconvenient neighbour, while the Oghuz, who had strong motivations to fight, were well suited to achieving this goal. A joint attack, in which other vassal ethne under the Khazars may have also participated, offered the opportunity to completely annihilate the Pechenegs, or weaken them to such an extent that they would be reduced to a weak ethnic union that could be easily controlled.

The Khazars, however, were risking a great deal. First, there was nothing to guarantee they would have better relations with their new neighbours than with the Pechenegs, who were at a comparable level of development. Al-Masʿūdī's *The Meadows of Gold*, contains information that seems to indicate very clearly that the subsequent relations between the Khazars and the Oghuz were terrible. In a report on an expedition by the Rus' that took place after 912/13, al-Masʿūdī writes that the Oghuz had a practice of taking advantage of the Volga freezing over in winter to organize invasions of the Khazar lands.[78]

76 Györffy 1972, 168–174 (Györffy proposes a slightly different interpretation. The Oghuz' aggression would have been caused not by the loss of their encampments by the Aral Sea, but simply by their desire to enlarge their territory at the Pechenegs' expense. The breakdown of the state of the Karluks, the Oghuz' eastern neighbours, was supposed make this goal easier to achieve); Kristó 1996, 182. Cf. also footnote 37.

77 Cf. footnote 18. Numerous scholars accept the above interpretation: Macarteney 1929, 343; 1968, 72; Kumekov 1972, 58–9; Zimonyi 1990, 168–9.

78 al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies* 1863, 19; Pellat 1962, 165.

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Secondly, in the event of failure, even partial failure, the Pechenegs would be able to maintain their political integrity and, as happened in reality, move into the Black Sea steppe, thereby undermining the political and economic interests of the Khazars in the region.[79] In view of such high risks, it would have been much more rational to take steps to maintain the status quo in the Volga region. The aggression of the Pechenegs who occupied this area did not pose such a serious threat to the Khazars' interests, all the more so given that the penal expeditions undertaken by successive Khazar *beys* probably limited its scale. A similar interpretation, one which rules out the existence of any cooperation between the two peoples, seems to be justified by the passage from Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio* cited above. There is no mention in it of any supposed military cooperation between the Oghuz and the Khazars. The war mentioned by the author was probably an attempt by the Pechenegs to occupy part of the Khazars' territory, following an attack by their eastern neighbours. This attempt was clearly unsuccessful, but because it was impossible for the Pechenegs to retreat to their old encampments, they had no alternative other than to cross over to the right bank of the Volga.[80]

How can the information written by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in Chapter 37 be explained? We need to remember that these were very violent ethnic shifts, and this is probably reflected in their speed. We can assume that clashes between the Oghuz and the Pechenegs, and then between them and the Khazars, were separated by a very small space of time. As a result, the oral tradition from which Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus drew his information about these events could easily have been distorted, and instead of information about two failures, the memory could have been preserved of just one failure resulting from cooperation between the Oghuz and the Khazars. If it is also correct to assume that Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio* was based on accounts from Pecheneg informants, then we can find another motive that would lead to combine two shameful defeats into one and likewise explain

79 The loss of the Black Sea steppe would have increased the importance of the Itil-Bulgar-Kiev-Kraków trade route, which in combination with the conquests of the Rus' princes, would have had a highly negative impact on the Khazars' interests in the region. Lewicki 1956, 34; Novosel'tsev 1990, 211; Romashov 2004, 222; Kovalev 2005, 80, 104–105, Zimonyi 2016, 278, 324, 352. For a more cautious interpretation: Zhivkov 2015, 123–146, 160. Cf. also Chapter 4.2 of the present book.

80 For a similar interpretation: Zimonyi 1990, 174–5; Kristó 1996, 182 (he assumes here, however, that the conflict between the Pechenegs and both the Oghuz and the Khazars took place at roughly the same time).

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the alleged collusion between their eastern and western neighbours. This is a deeply wounded sense of pride.[81]

Unfortunately, we do not know what direction the Pechenegs' road to the Black Sea took. A lack of source data allows us only to assume that it would have been easier for them to move through areas belonging to the weaker of their two western neighbours, i.e., the Burtas. Having found themselves on the right bank of the Volga, the Pechenegs – as previously mentioned – came into contact with the Magyars. The history of the conflict between these two peoples is presented to us by Constantine VII in three chapters of his work. We read in Chapter 37:

> The Pechenegs fled and wandered round, casting about for a place for their settlement; and when they reached the land which they now possess and found the Turks living in it, they defeated them in battle and expelled and cast them out, and settled in it, and have been masters of this country, as has been said, for fifty-five years to this day.[82]

In the next chapter, he adds:

> The nation of the Turks had of old their dwelling next to Chazaria, in the place called Lebedia after the name of their first voivode, which voivode was called by the personal name of Lebedias […]. Now in this place, the aforesaid Lebedia, there runs a river Chidmas, also called Chingilous.[83]

Next, after the information about the Pechenegs' defeat in their war with the Khazars and their exodus to the lands of the Magyars, the author writes:

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81 Bury 1906, 567–568; DAI-Com., 143; Macartney 1968, 82–86.

82 DAI, XXXVII 8–14 (p. 166/167). 'Οἱ δὲ Πατζινακῖται φυγόντες περιήρχοντο, ἀναψηλαφῶντες τόπον εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν κατασκήνωσιν, καταλαβόντες δὲ τὴν σήμερον παρ' αὐτῶν διακρατουμένην γῆν καὶ εὑρόντες τοὺς Τούρκους οἰκοῦντας ἐν αὐτῇ, πολέμου τρόπῳ τούτους νικήσαντες καὶ ἐκβαλόντες αὐτοὺς ἐξεδίωξαν, καὶ κατεσκήνωσαν ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ δεσπόζουσιν τὴν τοιαύτην χώραν, ὡς εἴρηται, μέχρι τὴν σήμερον ἔτη πεντήκοντα πέντε.'

83 DAI, XXXVIII 3–6, 7–9 (p. 170/171). '"Οτι τὸ τῶν Τούρκων ἔθνος πλησίον τῆς Χαζαρίας τὸ παλαιὸν τὴν κατοίκησιν ἔσχεν εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἐπονομαζόμενον Λεβεδία ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ πρώτου βοεβόδου αὐτῶν ἐπωνυμίας, ὅστις βοέβοδος τὸ μὲν τῆς κλήσεως ὄνομα Λεβεδίας προσηγορεύετο, […]. Ἐν τούτῳ οὖν τῷ τόπῳ, τῷ προρρηθέντι Λεβεδίᾳ, ποταμός ἐστιν ῥέων Χιδμάς, ὁ καὶ Χιγγιλοὺς ἐπονομαζόμενος.'

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> And when battle was joined between the Turks and the Pechenegs who were at that time called 'Kangar', the army of the Turks was defeated and split into two parts. One part went eastwards and settled in the region of Persia, and they to this day are called by the ancient denomination of the Turks 'Sabartoi asphaloi'; but the other part, together with their voivode and chief Lebedias, settled in the western region, in places called Atelkouzou, in which places the nation of the Pechenegs now lives.[84]

In the same chapter, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus presents the circumstances of the abdication of Lebedias and the assumption of power over all the Magyar tribes by Arpad and his race. It is significant that the new leader (ἄρχων) was appointed with the consent of the Khazar khagan and in accordance with a ritual typical of them.[85] After this information, the narrative of the *De administrando imperio* returns to issues of particular interest to us:

> Some years later, the Pechenegs fell upon the Turks and drove them out with their prince Arpad. The Turks, in flight and seeking a land to dwell in, came and in their turn expelled the inhabitants of great Moravia and settled in their land, in which the Turks now live to this day.[86]

Finally, in Chapter 40 of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' work we read:

> [...] at the invitation of Leo [...] they crossed over [Magyars – A.P.] and fought Symeon and totally defeated him, and drove on and penetrated as far as Preslav, having shut him up in the city called Moundraga; and they went back to their own country. [...] But after Symeon was once

84 DAI, XXXVIII 24–31, (p. 170–173). '᾽Αναμεταξὺ δὲ τῶν Τούρκων συναφθέντος πολέμου καὶ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν, τῶν τηνικαῦτα Κάγγαρ ἐπονομαζομένων, τὸ τῶν Τούρκων φοσσᾶτον ἡττήθη καὶ εἰς δύο διῃρέθη μέρη. Καὶ τὸ μὲν ἕν μέρος πρὸς ἀνατολὴν εἰς τὸ τῆς Περσίδος μέρος κατῴκησεν, οἳ καὶ μέχρι τοῦ νῦν κατὰ τὴν τῶν Τούρκων ἀρχαίαν ἐπωνυμίαν καλοῦνται Σάβαρτοι ἄσφαλοι, τὸ δὲ ἕτερον μέρος εἰς τὸ δυτικὸν κατῴκησε μέρος ἅμα καὶ τῷ βοεβόδῳ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀρχηγῷ, Λεβεδίᾳ, εἰς τόπους τοὺς ἐπονομαζομένους Ἀτελκούζου, ἐν οἷς τόποις τὰ νῦν τὸ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν ἔθνος κατοικεῖ.'

85 DAI, XXXVIII 31–55 (p. 172). Cf. DAI-Com., 148–149; Várady 1982, 49–53; Kristó 1996, 159–168 (Kristó corrects the account of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and suggests that it was Arpad's father, Álmos, who became Hungary's first military leader and prince).

86 DAI, XXXVIII 55–60 (p. 172/173). 'Μετὰ δέ τινας χρόνους τοῖς Τούρκοις ἐπιπεσόντες οἱ Πατζινακῖται, κατεδίωξαν αὐτοὺς μετὰ τοῦ ἄρχοντος αὐτῶν Ἀρπαδῆ. Οἱ οὖν Τοῦρκοι τραπέντες καὶ πρὸς κατοίκησιν γῆν ἐπιζητοῦντες, ἐλθόντες ἀπεδίωξαν οὗτοι τοὺς τὴν μεγάλην Μοραβίαν οἰκοῦντας, καὶ εἰς τὴν γῆν αὐτῶν κατεσκήνωσαν, εἰς ἣν νῦν οἱ Τοῦρκοι μέχρι τῆς σήμερον κατοικοῦσιν.'

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> more at peace with the emperor of the Romans and was free to act, he sent to the Pechenegs and made an agreement with them to attack and destroy the Turks. And when the Turks had gone off on a military expedition, the Pechenegs with Symeon came against the Turks and completely destroyed their families and miserably expelled thence the Turks who were guarding their country. When the Turks came back and found their country thus desolate and utterly ruined, they settled in the land where they live to-day [...].[87]

The accounts cited above have been and continue to be the subject of endless commentary, the main purpose of which has been to clarify three contentious issues. The first is the chronology of events. While it was relatively easy to set a date for the final expulsion of the Magyars from the Black Sea steppe, the moment of their first clash with the Pechenegs has not been precisely determined. The second issue is closely related to the first, i.e., whether in fact the Magyars were defeated twice by the Pechenegs and forced to leave their homeland. The third issue is the question of the location and mutual relationship of the two geographical lands inhabited by the Magyars before they migrated to their Carpathian territories. The value of the above-mentioned passages as source material has been assessed in different ways. The relatively clear and easy to interpret passages from Chapters 37 and 40 have been contrasted with the very confusing narrative of Chapter 38. Hungarian academics, who for understandable reasons have shown particular interest in the aforementioned parts of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' work, have applied nearly every available method of interpretation to them.[88] The information in Chapter 38 has often been described as having no value for reconstructing the actual course of events. A functional analysis has sometimes taken the place of a strictly historical interpretation. There are story lines in the accounts of Constantine VII's Magyar informants that are clearly intended to explain or even legitimise the political changes that took place within the Magyar tribal

87 DAI, XL 8–12, 13–21 (p. 176/177). '[...] παρὰ Λέοντος, [...] προσκληθέντες διεπέρασαν, καὶ τὸν Συμεὼν πολεμήσαντες κατὰ κράτος αὐτὸν ἥττησαν, καὶ ἐξελάσαντες μέχρι τῆς Πρεσθλάβου διῆλθον, ἀποκλείσαντες αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ κάστρον τὸ λεγόμενον Μουνδράγα, καὶ εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν χώραν ἐπέστρεψαν. [...] Μετὰ δὲ τὸ πάλιν τὸν Συμεὼν μετὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ῥωμαίων εἰρηνεῦσαι καὶ λαβεῖν ἄδειαν διεπέμψατο πρὸς τοὺς Πατζινακίτας, καὶ μετὰ αὐτῶν ὡμοφώνησεν τοῦ καταπολεμῆσαι καὶ ἀφανίσαι τοὺς Τούρκους. Καὶ ὅτε οἱ Τοῦρκοι πρὸς ταξίδιον ἀπῆλθον, οἱ Πατζινακῖται μετὰ Συμεὼν ἦλθον κατὰ τῶν Τούρκων, καὶ τὰς αὐτῶν φαμιλίας παντελῶς ἐξηφάνισαν, καὶ τοὺς εἰς φύλαξιν τῆς χώρας αὐτῶν Τούρκους ἀπ' ἐκεῖσε κακιγκάκως ἀπεδίωξαν. Οἱ δ Τοῦρκοι ἱποστρέψαντες καὶ τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν οὕτως εἰρόντες ἔρημον καὶ κατηφανισμένην, κατεσκήνωσαν εἰς τὴν γῆν, εἰς ἣν καὶ σήμερον κατοικοῦσιν [...].'

88 Cf. Kristó 1996, 97–108.

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federation in the 9th century. An example of this is the story of Lebedias' 'abdication' and ceding of power to the Arpads. It is hard to deny the accuracy of these kinds of charges. On the other hand, a complete rejection of the information contained in Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio* would hardly be justified. Convincing answers to some of the questions raised in his very complicated narrative have yet to be found. However, such a state of affairs does not justify a sometimes overly arbitrary questioning of the reliability of the information it contains.

Efforts have been made to establish the chronology of the fighting between the Pechenegs and the Magyars using information from the *Chronicon* of the abbot Regino of Prüm. He noted that in 889 the Hungarians (*gens Hungarium*) were expelled from their lands by the Pechenegs (*Pecinaci*), who surpassed them in numbers and bravery.[89] According to Regino, at the time of the Pechenegs' attack the Magyars also occupied the areas surrounding the mouth of the Don, which has inclined some researchers to consider the date given by him as the moment of the first clash between the two ethne, and as a result of which the Magyars left Lebedia.[90] Such a chronology was adopted by, among others, C.A. Macartney. In his opinion, the Pechenegs first appeared in areas west of the Volga as early as ca. 880. Their migration was said to be the result of ethnic shifts in Eurasia. An additional argument was that of a brief mention of the defeat of a large number of Pechenegs by Askold and Dir.[91] However, this information comes from a late compilation (16th century) of the *Nikonian Chronicle* and was moreover placed under a date inconsistent with that proposed by Macartney (867).[92]

J. Marquart presented a diametrically different concept, completely ignoring the account of Regino of Prüm. He claims the first Magyar-Pecheneg clash took place around 862. The basis for such an assumption is information provided by Hincmar of Reims about the ravaging of Louis the German's East Francia by the Magyars.[93] According to Marquart, their military activity in Western Europe testifies to their abandonment of the Sea of Azov and their relocation

89 'Gens Hungarium […] a Scythicis regnis et a paludibus, quas Thanais sua refusione in inmensum porrigit, egrssa est. […] Ex supradictis locis gens memorata a finitibus sibi populis, qui Pecinaci vocantur, a propriis sedibus expulsa est, eo quod numero et virtute prestarent […]'. Regino, 131, 132.

90 DAI-Com., 144, 148.

91 Macartney 1929, 343; 1968, 69–79.

92 PNL, AM 6375 (AD 867), p. 9. Cf. Sielicki 1968, 225 (n. 1).

93 Ann.Bert., sub anno 862, p. 458. Constantine-Cyril, Methodius' brother, encountered Magyars in Crimea at roughly the same time. VCM, 33 (original), 57 (trans.).

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to areas west of the Dnieper River.[94] The observations of the German scholar are important for dating the presence of the Magyars on the Black Sea steppe. Since they were able in the early 860s to organize an expedition to the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, it is reasonable to assume that they had to control at least the western parts of the Black Sea steppe at that time. However, this is not a clear indication of their loss of control over the eastern part of that region. It is also worth noting that according to a Byzantine chronicler, as early as in 836, a group of Turks helped the Bulgar Khan Presian suppress an uprising by former citizens of Adrianople (Hadrianopolis), who had been resettled during the time of Krum on the Lower Danube.[95] If the allies of the Bulgarian ruler are identified with the Magyars, their presence on the Black Sea steppe in the 830s should seriously considered. However, their involvement in fighting on the Lower Danube proves nothing more than the fact that they were already regarded by their neighbours as a worthwhile ally.

György Györffy is highly sceptical about the possibility of establishing the date for the first attack of the Pechenegs on the basis of the chronology in Regino of Prüm's *Chronicon*. Györffy proves that the aforementioned mention was not made in 889, but somewhat later, probably in 906–908. His main argument is the repetition of specific names with names appearing with information incorrectly dated to 901.[96] In addition, other observations by Györffy seem to exclude the possibility of using this source to determine the date of the Pechenegs' first attack. He correctly points out that Regino writes about only one and not two clashes between these two peoples as the reason for the Magyars leaving Scythia. No other interpretation is possible, since it is hard to imagine that a monk writing in Lorraine would have noted information concerning ethnic shifts within the Black Sea steppe. Such events were part of the internal affairs of the steppe, and not of much interest to Western European citizens.[97] The situation would have been completely different if the Magyars had left Scythia and arrived in Pannonia, since by that time, migration had become a phenomenon of enormous significance. It was followed by invasions that until the mid-10th century impacted almost the whole of Western Europe. The earliest of them was recorded by Regino himself, who died in 915. Therefore, the mentions in the *Chronicon* cannot provide a basis for setting the date of the first attack of the Pechenegs.[98] Its chronology is all the more

94 Marquart 1903, 33.
95 Georg.Mon., 817–818. Cf. Varady 1982, 24.
96 Györffy 1975, 285–286.
97 Györffy 1975, 284–285.
98 Despite the reservations listed above, this was recently accepted by S.A. Romashov (1999, 24; 2004, 221).

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doubtful given that the ethnic shifts that led the Pechenegs to leave the Volga region had already begun, as we established above, around 893. The Pechenegs could have arrived on the Black Sea steppe only after that date. The final exodus of the Magyars from this area occurred no later than in 896.[99] Such a date seems to confirm the accounts of Byzantine sources, which mainly recorded events related to the Byzantine-Bulgarian war of 894–896, and of Latin sources, which recorded the process of the Magyars' assuming control of the Carpathian Basin.[100] One extremely important conclusion can be drawn here – namely, that if there were two wars between the Pechenegs and the Magyars, and both took place on the Black Sea steppe, then they would have to have been divided by a small space of time. If that were indeed the case, it is unlikely that they would have been seen in the sources as two separate clashes.

The case is similar with the second disputed issue, i.e., did the two wars actually take place between Pechenegs and the Magyars – and if so, where did they take place? The only account from which we learn details about the two attacks by the Pechenegs is Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio*. The author makes it clear that the first attack occurred when the Magyars lived in Lebedia, and its immediate consequence was the splintering of the ethnos into two groups, one of which migrated west to Atelkouzou, while the other went east to Persia. Most researchers assume that the target of the latter group's migration was not Persia itself, but Armenia, which had repeatedly found itself under Persian rule.[101] Another target destination was proposed by László Várady, who assumed that the *Sabartoi asphaloi* emigrated to Persian Khorasan.[102]

However, much more interesting than this Magyar sub-group's new home is the name they used for themselves. In its original form it was written: Σάβαρτοι ἄσφαλοι. According to Marquart, it is associated with the Armenian name *Sevordik* or 'Black Sons'. Marquart claims it is derived from the ethnonym of the *Sevortioi* people, who are found in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' *De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*. They were said to live somewhere in Transcaucasia (Georgia or Armenia) and their leaders received imperial orders (*keleuseis*) from the Byzantine rulers. This last fact indicates the *Sevortioi*'s dependence on

99 These circumstances seem to have been ignored by Constantin Zuckerman (1998, 666 (n. 11)).

100 Georg.Mon., 853–855; LeoGramm., 257–268; Th.Cont., 357–360; Sym.Magist., 275–278; Io.Scyl., 176–177; Ann.Fuld., 129–130. For more on the Byzantine – Bulgarian wars in the years 894–896: Leszka 2013, 76–95.

101 Marquart 1903, 36–37; Macartney 1968, 88–89; Łowmiański 1975, 61. Cf. Kristó 1996, 138–141.

102 Varady 1982, 27.

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Constantinople.[103] Marquart suggested that this was a distortion of an ethnic name that was actually *Sev-Ogrik*, or 'Black Magyars',[104] which would be evidence that Constantine VII was not mistaken about their possible association with the sub-group of that people that later crossed the Carpathian Mountains.

However, a closer analysis of the accounts found in sources concerning the people referred to as the *Sabartoi asphaloi* raises further interpretative challenges. They were known to Arab writers as *as-Savardiya*, and are mentioned under this name for the first time by al-Baladuri. From his accounts we learn that they attacked the city of Shamkur in Armenia. According to Marquart, this attack took place between 750 and 760.[105] Macartney, in turn, believes that this did not mark the period when the Magyars resettled in the South Caucasus, but represented a solitary expedition carried out, most likely, with the consent of the Khazar rulers, whom they served.[106] The *Sevordik*, however, are not mentioned by Armenian sources as permanent residents of Armenia until the mid-9th century.[107] Therefore, it is sometimes assumed that their resettlement could have taken place sometime between 830 and 840; it is also likely that there was a disintegration of the Magyar community at that time.[108] The same conclusion is reached by Pritsak. In his research, however, he relied on ibn Rusta's information about the 'first border of the Magyars', mentioned earlier in this chapter, which is said to come from a work by another Arab author, al-Khwārizmī, written no later than in 833. The rest of the information about the Magyars, which concerns their time on the Black Sea steppe, was taken by ibn Rusta from al-Jarmī, who, in turn, could not have written his work earlier than around 840.[109]

The chronological data obtained during earlier studies seem to suggest that the first *Kangar*/Pecheneg war with Magyars/*Sabartoi asphaloi* took place at least a half a century before the clash that resulted in the latter people's exodus from the Black Sea steppe. This observation also seems to lead to the logical conclusion that the Volga region must have been the site of the earlier conflicts. According to the accounts of Constantine VII, this is also the area where we should locate Lebedia. Such an interpretation is difficult to accept

103 DCB 1, II 48, 13–14, (p. 687); Moffat, Tall 2012, 687. Cf. Róna-Tas (1999, 418–420) questions the existence of the *Sabartoi asphaloi*, considering them a product of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' erudion. It is hard to accept his opinion.

104 Marquart 1903, 36.

105 Marquart 1903, 37; Macartney 1968, 88. Cf. Dunlop 1954, 202.

106 Macartney 1968, 90.

107 Macartney 1968, 90. In the year 853, to be exact.

108 Łowmiański 1973, 61–62; Kristó 1996, 147–148.

109 Pritsak 1976, 19.

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by researchers, however, who are inclined to place Lebedia on the Black Sea steppe. Macartney attempted to resolve this contradiction by demonstrating that the disintegration of the Magyars occurred as a result of an attack not by the Pechenegs, but by a Caucasian tribe, the Cherkess (Circassians), mentioned by al-Masʿūdī as the Nandarin. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus identified them as the same group, partly in error, and partly in order to point out the important role played by the Pechenegs in shaping the political relations in the Black Sea region. The Cherkess invaded the Magyars at a time when the latter lived in areas north of the Kuban River.[110] This or a similar location would seem to be beyond dispute, first because this would mean the Magyars neighboured the Cherkess, which is a necessary condition for the possibility of a conflict between the two ethne; secondly, such a location is tentatively supported by the consequences of an event mentioned here earlier numerous times: if the Magyars' defeat led directly to the disintegration of their original ethnic community and to the migration of the *Sabartoi asphaloi* to the South Caucasus, the conflict would very likely have taken place in the environs of the Kuban. According to further findings by Macartney, the western faction of the Magyars went to Lebedia, where it was again attacked, this time by the Pechenegs.[111] Since Macartney is willing to accept, as does John Bagnell Bury, that *De administrando imperio* is only a loose, collection of notes from various sources and drawn up at different times,[112] lacking deeper analysis, he therefore considers that Chapter 38 provides information only on the first clash between the Pechenegs and the Magyars. The circumstances of the second conflict between the two peoples would therefore be presented only in Chapter 40.[113]

A different way of resolving this troublesome contradiction is a concept proposed by Henryk Łowmiański, who, unlike Macartney, considered the passage in Constantine VII's work concerning the disintegration of the Magyar community to be credible. However, the author of *The Origins of Poland* (*Początki Polski*) located the Pechenegs' first attack in the Volga region, when the Magyars lived within the territory of what would later become Bashkiria. Archaeological data from the vicinity of the Belaia and Kama Rivers, as well as a passages from ibn Rusta, seem to confirm the possibility of a conflict between the two ethne during their nomadic period east of the Volga. After the defeat of the *Sabartoi asphaloi*, they are said to have travelled to the South Caucasus along the Volga, while a second group of Magyars reached Levedia following a

110 Macartney 1968, 103, 106–108.
111 Macartney 1968, 108.
112 Bury 1906.
113 Macartney 1968, 80–83, 96–103.

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path the led down the Don. Łowmiański's final conclusion was based on topomastic data collected in the Kazan, Tambov and Simbirsk Governorates.[114]

It seems that the two hypotheses presented above, both aimed at clarifying the troublesome discrepancies contained in Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio*, unfortunately raise a number of additional doubts. In terms of Macartney's reasoning, the method of criticism he applied to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' account needs to be approached with considerable scepticism. Based on J.B. Bury's well researched findings, Macartney goes one step further – namely, he tries to prove that the accounts that gave Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio* its final shape concerned a single clash between the Pechenegs and the Magyars, but the fact that they came from various informants could have led to an accidental 'doubling' of the battles between the two peoples. However, in the absence of any alternative source describing in equal detail the events connected with the Pechenegs' journey to the Black Sea steppe, such a conclusion exposes its author to accusations of having made arbitrary choices in the treatment of data.[115] The identification of the Cherkess/Nandarins with the *Kangar* is also highly questionable. Constantine VII states twice that the Pechenegs used to be called *Kangar*. This claim arouses Macartney's scepticism, who quite rightly notes that the Pechenegs had never appeared earlier under such a name (at least in the sources known to us), which indicates that they were not the same as the *Kangar*.[116] This last argument would fully justify Macartney's assumptions if not for a reference made at the end of Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio*, which clearly states that the nickname (προσηγορία) *Kangar* was used in reference only to the bravest members of the Pecheneg tribe (ἀνδρειότεροι) and to those who were among the 'better born' (εὐγενέστεροι).[117] In view of the such a finding, Macartney's argument is proved inconclusive, a fact of which he is aware and he thus questions the value of the above mention, demonstrating that the word 'kangar' does not have the meaning attributed to it by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the Old Turkic language. However, if we acknowledge that the Byzantine emperor did not make such a statement *expresis verbis*, but offered it only as one possible interpretation, then Macartney's linguistic analysis, regardless of its results, seems totally misguided and incapable of achieving the desired outcome.[118] It is also difficult to accept the

114 Łowmiański 1973, 62–67.
115 Łowmiański 1973, 58.
116 Macartney 1968, 106.
117 DAI, XXXVII 68–71 (p. 170).
118 Macartney 1968, 104–106.

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argument that Constantine VII would have attributed to the Pechenegs a victory over the Magyars in which they actually played no role when his intention was to demonstrate to his son the political significance of this people. The learned *basileus* had enough real examples to illustrate this thesis that he did not have to resort to a more or less deliberate fabrication.[119] Finally, the placement of the Magyars on the Kuban River is also questionable. This hypothesis rests on a weak source base. It would seem more justified to place the Black Bulgars in this region.[120] Their existence is confirmed by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the middle of the 10th century. The emperor writes about them twice. In Chapter 12 of the *De administrando imperio* he assumes they are capable of attacking Khazaria, while in Chapter 42 he suggests that their territory is located near the Azov Sea.[121] Both pieces of information seem to confirm the location we have adopted as likewise being valid in the mid-10th century. Macartney's hypothesis that the territory north of the Kuban River could have been inhabited by Magyars in the first half of the 9th century is thus rather unlikely.[122]

The second hypothesis cannot be accepted without reservation. If the Magyars, as Łowmiański claims, left Bashkiria as a result of Pecheneg invasions, then we need to ascertain their character. In other words: was their aim to conquer the territory of their neighbours, or did they only carry out systematic looting attacks, without any attempt to seize the Magyars' nomadic settlements? The first possibility clearly seems to be indicated by the account provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. From the troublesome mentions found in Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio*, it can be deduced that the *Kangar*, having expelled the *Sabartoi asphaloi*, then occupied their lands. However, it is unclear why they should have done so in the period between 830 and 840. The easiest thing to assume would be that at this time some kind of migration was taking place which encompassed large areas of the steppe. This is what Golden suggests. His interpretation was rejected, however, because the chronology of the source data on which he based his reasoning was questionable. Another reason this problem is worth considering because Łowmiański seems to suggest that the Pechenegs occupied at least part of Bashkiria, pointing to a tribal name still found in this land – Youmalan, which the researcher associates with the Pecheneg and not the Magyars.[123] This is the first reservation.

119 Macartney 1968, 108.

120 Cf. Chapter 2 of the present book.

121 DAI, XII (p. 64/65); XLII (p. 186/187).

122 For more on the question of what lands were inhabited by the Black Bulgars: Łowmiański 1973, 65, fig. 2; Wozniak 1979, 120–121; Zhivkov 2015, 136–140.

123 Łowmiański 1973, 62.

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The second is as follows: if a direct result of the first invasion of the Pechenegs was the disintegration of the Magyar community, which seems to be the case in the account of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, then any attempt to date these events to a later time is unjustified. Nevertheless, this is what Łowmiański did, claiming that before the *Sabartoi asphaloi* separated from the rest of their brethren, they travelled with them over a long stretch of road until they reached the mouth of the Kama, and only then headed south, while the rest of the tribe went westwards. What is more, Łowmiański allows that both groups may have reached Lebedia, where the break-up occurred.[124] This land is also located on the Black Sea steppe.

A satisfactory solution to all the problems associated with the first clash between Pechenegs and Magyars – or rather, if we adopt the timeline of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' narrative, between the *Kangar* and the *Sabartoi asphaloi* – would seem to be impossible, especially one based on the information contained in extant sources. The picture of political relations in the Volga region in the 830s and 840s looms as very complicated. At this time, the Khazar Khaganate seems to have been experiencing a crisis, which was accompanied by major power shifts within it. If so, the state would have been vulnerable to exploitation by hostile political entities such as the Pechenegs. The Lebedias' tribes, allies of the Khazars, were most likely also victims of Pecheneg aggression.

An extremely interesting issue is the relation between these events and the rebellion of the Kabars. From Chapter 39 of *De administrando imperio* we learn that they were originally among the tribes of the Khazars, but found themselves in conflict with its rulers, rebelled, were defeated and seceded from the tribe. They eventually merged with the Magyars and settled with them in Atelkouzou.[125] The centrifugal nature of the Kabars' political aspirations could have, but not necessarily made them natural allies of the Pechenegs.[126] In any case, it contributed to temporary instability in the *Pax Chazarica*, which the warrior neighbours of the Khaganate tried to use to their advantage. However, this crisis was eventually overcome; the Khazars managed not only to hold back the Pechenegs, but also to maintain at least nominal control over the Black Sea steppe. The merger of the defeated *Sabartoi asphaloi* faction with the Kabars gave rise to a new political organism, which most likely harboured

124 Łowmiański 1973, 67.

125 DAI, XXXIX, (p. 174/175).

126 Cf. Bartha 1975, 63–64. Bartha assumes that the Pechenegs took the side of the Khazars in the Kabars' revolt. But this interpretation seems to contradict both data gathered by Constantine VII and information found in Arabic sources.

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no hostilities towards the Khazars. On the basis of the complicated narrative in Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio*, I believe that after the secession of the Kabars and their domination of the Magyar tribal union, a compromise was reached between the former rebels and the Khaganate.[127] In exchange for formal recognition of the sovereignty of their rulers, they were granted considerable independence. They made eager used of this, especially in the latter half of the 9th century, when they began to penetrate areas west of the Carpathians militarily. In spite of internal crisis and external pressures from its enemies, the Khaganate managed to maintain its influence on the Black Sea steppe. Their hegemony would come to an end only in the last decade of the 9th century as a result of Pecheneg migration.

Despite all the doubts expressed above, we can assume there were two wars between the Pechenegs and the Magyars. It should be noted, however, that the first clash was part of a series of events that contributed to the ethnogenesis of the Magyars, whom Byzantine authors called 'Turks'. If we follow the ethnic terminology used by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, then we should say that Lebedias' tribes known as the *Sabartoi asphaloi* had to face the *Kangar*, or – if the last ethnonym is treated as a *pars pro toto* of the whole ethnos – with the Pechenegs. As a result of their defeat, a sub-set of the defeated group, perhaps with the consent or even inspiration of the Khazars, migrated to the Black Sea steppe.[128] In the course of their migration, or after they had arrived in their new home, they merged with Kabars.[129] This was one of a series of events that led to the creation of a new political organism, i.e., the ethnogenesis of Magyars. The merger of these two groups was probably peaceful, as evidenced by the fact that in the 880s both remained ethnically distinct.[130] Nevertheless, the new political system, as Constantine VII clearly indicates, had a much more centralized structure than the loose confederation led by the Lebedias.[131] The compromise reached with the Khazars, a sign of which was the elevation of Arpad to power,[132] defined the place of the Magyars within the *Pax Chazarica*, i.e., within the political relations of Eastern Europe at the time.

127 DAI, XXXVIII 31–55 (p. 172/173).

128 Cf. Várady 1982, 27.

129 Cf. Bartha 1975, 63; Várady 1982, 30; Kristó 1996, 150–151 (contains a breakdown of different viewpoints on Hungarian histography).

130 Ann.Iuv., sub anno 881 (p. 742). According to these accounts, the entire tribal union forayed west, reaching Vienna. The Kabars remained allied with the other tribes, but operated independently. Cf. Kristó 1996, 150.

131 DAI, XXXVIII 53–55 (p. 172/173). Constantine VII stresses that the Turks (Magyars) did not have a monarch before Arpad.

132 DAI, XXXVIII 51–53 (p. 172/173).

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We can therefore see that the first defeat in the struggle against the Pechenegs was a fundamental event for the Magyars, since it initiated a series of events that ultimately led to the formation of their community, both in terms of its ethnic composition and its political structure. These circumstances most likely determined how these events were preserved within the Magyar oral tradition, which was the basis for the accounts of Constantine VII. We should acknowledge the claims of those researchers who place this clash in the Volga region, although such an interpretation will pose further problems for us.

At this point, we should proceed to analyze the third and last of the issues mentioned above, i.e., the location of the two geographical lands mentioned by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus: Lebedia (Λεβεδία) and Atelkouzou (Ἀτελκούζου). There is still no consensus among scholars as to whether both lands were located in the Black Sea steppe region.[133]

Lebedia's location raises more difficulties, as linguistic analysis has not produced clear results. Since, according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, the name of the land was to come from the name of the Magyar voivode Lebedias, some researchers assume that its source is the Old Hungarian term for steppe areas – *lebedi*.[134] Another proposal for deciphering its etymology was presented by Macartney, for which it is a Slavicized term meaning 'a place containing many trees and water, where the soil is wet and swampy'.[135] Still other researchers believe that the word's etymology is derived from the Hungarian root *lel-*, which appears in such words such as *lelek* – spirit, soul'.[136] We can thus see that not only is there no fundamental agreement on the origin of the word Λεβεδία, but also that the results of linguistic analyses are of doubtful value in determining the location of this land.

Much more worthy of mention are the attempts to identify the river Chidmas/Chingilous, which according to the accounts of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, flowed through Lebedia. Some researchers are inclined to see its equivalent in the Molochnaia, a small river flowing into the Azov Sea, formed by Tokmak (a metathesis of its first syllable allegedly appears in the name Chidmas) and the Chingul (Chingilous). Such a resolution can be explained by the fact that the learned *basileus* recorded two names for the same river.[137] Łowmiański believed that this was supported by an additional

133 Kristó 1996, 107–110.

134 DAI-Com., 147; Swoboda 1967, 30.

135 Macartney 1968, 92–93.

136 Artamonov 1962, 341; Tryjarski 1975a, 512.

137 Marquart 1903, 32; Macartney 1968, 91; Łowmiański 1973, 59; Huxley 1984, 81. Marquart adds that the environs of the Molochnaia River were supposedly still known as Lepedika in the late 19th and early 20th century. The source of his information, however, is unknown.

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argument – namely the location of the Molochnaia River almost exactly along the border of Saltovo-Maiaki culture, which would explain the fact that a relatively small river attained a representative status.[138]

However, even if we assume that Molochnaia was the river Constantine VII had in mind, the matter of defining the borders of Lebedia remains an open question. We do not need, as Łowmiański would like, to recognize the Molochnaia as its eastern border. The account of Constantine VII creates equally valid premises for stating that the Chidmas/Chingilous flowed through the interior of Lebedia, and thus was not a border river. It should also be remembered that there is a historiographical tradition which accepted the fact that the Magyars remained for a significant time in the vicinity of the Don, i.e., in areas located much farther east than the Molochnaia. Similar information can be found in the writings of Regino of Prüm, whose chronicle is of little value for the chronology of events, but according to Hungarian scholars the data they contain can be treated with a high degree of confidence. The Lorraine abbot explicitly mentions that at the time of their attack by the Pechenegs, the Magyars lived in the vicinity of the Tanais (Don).[139] Traces of a similar textual tradition can be found in the Hungarian chronicles.[140] It seems, therefore, that the eastern border of Lebedia could have been the Don, rather than the Molochnaia.

Another proposal was made by the Hungarian scholar Géza Feher, who argued that the Chidmas/Chingilous should be identified with the Donets River.[141] Finally, it was also thought that the river was the same as the Inhul tributary of the Boh.[142] According to Edward Tryjarski, from a purely linguistic point of view, this is the most probable interpretation.[143]

138 Łowmiański 1973, 59.

139 Regino, 131.

140 In particular, in: G.Ung., 34, 39. Cf. Spinei 2003, 52–53.

141 Fehér 1959, 308.

142 Vernadsky 1957, 17 (According to Vernadsky, Lebedia stretched from Podolia and the Inhul area in the west, to the upper Donets and Don in the east, and to the Ugra in the north); Ilinskii 1930, 101 (an identification with the Inhulets, a right tributary of the Dnieper River, is also permissible); Zukerman 1998, 668 (both of these rivers are the Inhul); Kristó 1996, 111; 1998, 152–154 (Kristó assumes that the rivers in question are the Kodyma and Inhul, which means that Lebedia would have been located south of the lower Boh); Múcska 2004, 283; Spinei 2003, 41 (Spinei does not attempt to identify the Chidmas [Chingilous] river, but assumes that Lebedia could have been located between the Volga and Don rivers or between the Don and Dnieper). Cf. also DAI-Com., 147; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989, 392 (n. 3).

143 Tryjarski 1975a, 512.

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Far fewer researchers locate the Lebedia in the Volga region. Among them was Gábor Vékony.[144] He believed we should look for this land between the Urals and the Aral Sea. The Chidmas/Chingilous was, in his opinion, the same as the Emba.[145] László Várady identified this mysterious river with the Bolshoi Uzen and Maly Uzen, which means that Lebedia would have been on the steppe between the Volga and the Yaik-Ural.[146] Our earlier observations concerning the site of the battle between the *Sabartoi asphaloi* and the *Kangar* seem to justify locating Lebedia somewhere to the east of the Volga. However, the findings of the archaeologists referred to above do not allow us to accept either of the two hypotheses mentioned above. The homeland of the people with the material culture closest to finds from the Hungarians from the Pannonian area have been located on the Belaia and Kama Rivers, and therefore far north of the Emba river basin or the Bolshoi Uzen and Maly Uzen.

It is worth noting one more circumstance that has become a subject of consideration by numerous researchers. According to Constantine VII, the name of the home of the *Sabartoi asphaloi* was supposed to be derived from the name of the voivode Lebedias. The credibility of this information has often been questioned. Researchers have emphasized that the construction of the toponym 'Lebedia' cannot be of Hungarian origin, because it is in stark contradiction with the native tradition for creating personal names, which in Hungarian is certainly not the final suffix *-ia*.[147] It also seems unlikely that a person's name would become a toponym for a great land or province inhabited by a whole people. The Hungarian language allows for this possibility only in the case of small settlements.[148] In the light of such arrangements, Lebedia could only be the seat of the voivode himself and not of a whole union of tribes. It should be noted, however, that in the realities of the tribal societies that lived on the steppe, a primary factor guaranteeing their survival was their bonds of personal subjection. Territorial ties played a lesser role. Given this situation, Lebedias, as someone who bound individual tribes, naturally united and embodied the whole community. His seat was obviously also the centre of community relations. The centre was thus located where the voivode lived.[149] Such an ascertainment would render efforts to locate Lebedia completely pointless. It could be located both in the Volga region and on the Black

144 Vékony 1986, 42–43, 50–51.
145 For a critical look at Vékony's views: Kristó 1996, 109–110.
146 Várady 1982, 26. Várady does not present any evidence rooted in linguistic research to support his proposed identification.
147 Kristó 1996, 107; Róna-Tas 1999, 418.
148 Kristó 1996, 108; Róna-Tas 1999, 418–419.
149 Cf. Moór 1936, 217; Kristó 1996, 108.

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Sea steppe. After all, according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' account, Lebedias would remain at the head of the tribal union even after the defeat he suffered to the Pechenegs. Yet, convincingly identifying references to the Chidmas/Chingilous River remains a key issue in resolving the question at hand.

The location of Atelkouzou raises markedly fewer doubts. In this case, researchers agree more on the etymology of this toponym. In all probability it consists of two nouns: Turkic 'atel/itil/etel' (water, river) and Turkic 'köz' or Finno-Ugric 'küzü' (area, terrain). Thus, the word could mean an area through which several rivers flow, as well as an area situated on one river or between rivers.[150]

In *De administrando imperio*, apart from the previously quoted passage from Chapter 38, some very important information about Atelkouzou can also be found in Chapter 40:

> The place in which the Turks used formerly to be is called after the name of the river that runs through it, Etel and Kouzu, and in it the Pechenegs live now.[151]

The above passage seems to indicate that this is a riverside territory, but we do not have any other information to identify it. Therefore, the majority of researchers wishing to determine the location of Atelkouzou refer to the data contained at the end of Chapter 38:

> The place of the Pechenegs, in which at that time the Turks lived [i.e., the time of the Pechenegs' attack – A.P.], is called after the name of the local rivers. The rivers are these: the first river is that called Barouch, the second river that called Koubou, the third river that called Troullos, the fourth river that called Broutos, the fifth river that called Seretos.[152]

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150 Marquart 1903, 33; Macartney 1968, 96; Łowmiański 1973, 59; Huxley 1984, 82; Kristó 1996, 155–156; Múcska 2004, 283; Spinei 2003, 43; DAI-Com., 148, 151; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989, 393 (n. 13).

151 DAI, XL 23–25 (p. 176/177). "Ο δὲ τόπος, ἐν ᾧ πρότερον οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἱπῆρχον, ὀνομάζεται κατὰ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τοῦ ἐκεῖσε διερχομένου ποταμοῦ Ἐτὲλ καὶ Κουζοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἀρτίως οἱ Πατζιναικῖται κατοικοῦσιν.'

152 DAI, XXXVIII 66–71 (p. 174/175). "Οτι ὁ τῶν Πατζιναικιτῶν τόπος, ἐν ᾧ τῷ τότε καιρῷ κατῴκησαν οἱ Τοῦρκοι, καλεῖται κατὰ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τῶν ἐκεῖσε ὄντων ποταμῶν. Οἱ δὲ ποταμοίεἰσιν οὗτοι· ποταμὸς πρῶτος ὁ καλούμενος Βαρούχ, ποταμὸς δεύτερος ὁ καλούμενος Κουβοῦ, ποταμὸς τρίτος ὁ καλούμενος Τροῦλλος, ποταμὸς τέταρτος ὁ καλούμενος Βροῦτος, ποταμὸς πέμπτος ὁ καλούμενος Σέρετος.'

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This passage is of paramount importance for further consideration of this topic, mainly because the names of the rivers mentioned in it have been indisputably deciphered. These are respectively: the Dnieper, Boh, Dniester, Prut, and Siret.[153] Since the above description refers to an area with an abundance of rivers, to which it owes its name, many scholars have been inclined to believe that this is Atelkouzou, although the quoted excerpt does not explicitly mention this name. Supporters of such an interpretation include Marquart and Łowmiański.[154] In their view, Atelkouzou is a separate land from Lebedia, bounded to the east by the Dnieper River and to the west by the Danube or the Seret. Other researchers (Macartney, Grégoire, Artamonov) are inclined either to stipulate the identity of Lebedia and Atelkouzou[155] or otherwise define the area occupied by the latter land.[156] The latter possibility seems to be worthy of consideration, given that the interpretation presented above is not the only plausible one. We could just as well adopt another, according to which, if the aforementioned rivers flowed through the territory of the Pechenegs, its rulers (present and former) would rule on both their right and left banks, so that the Dnieper and Siret would cease to function as the borders of nomadic settlements. Moreover, if we assume that by the term 'the place of the Pechenegs' (ὁ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν τόπος) Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus understood the whole territory occupied by them in the middle of the 10th century, and not only its western part, then it is all the more difficult to accept the hypothesis presented earlier. From his writings it is clear that the lands occupied by the Pechenegs at that time stretched between the Danube and the Don. We must also note that in the passage under discussion, almost all the larger rivers flowing into the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov are mentioned. The only ones omitted are the Don and Danube. The explanation for their absence is relatively simple. The Danube and Don were the borders of the Pechenegs' nomadic settlements, so they did not flow through the territory of these steppe-people. The only circumstance that undermines our interpretation is the lack of an equivalent for the Donets, which does not flow into any sea, but is an important river in the region. It seems, however, that the Chapter 42 of *De administrando imperio* contains an interesting piece of information that both explains this doubt and supports our reasoning:

153 DAI-Com., 149; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989, 394 (n. 26, 27).

154 Marquart 1903, 33; Łowmiański 1973, 59; Huxley 1984, 83; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989, 394 (n. 27).

155 Macartney 1968, 94–96; Grégoire 1937, 635; 1938, 268; Artamonov 1962, 340.Cf. Tryjarski 1975a, 512; Kristó 1996, 154.

156 Györffy 1975, 287.Cf. Spinei 2003, 44.

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> From the Danube river to the aforesaid city of Sarkel is a journey of 60 days. In this land between [i.e., between the Danube and the Don, on which lay Sarkel – A.P.] are many rivers: the two biggest of them are the Dniester and the Dnieper. But there are other rivers, that which is called the Syngoul and the Hybyl and the Almatai and the Kouphis and the Bogou and many others.[157]

It is clearly stated here that the area between the Danube and the Don is a land of many rivers, and this provides a means for interpreting the name of the territory of the Magyars and Pechenegs – Atelkouzou. It should moreover be noted that according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, the rivers particularly representative for this area are the Dnieper and Dniester, which are also mentioned in the final part of Chapter 38. The learned emperor mentions several other rivers, including the Syngoul, which can be identified as the Donets,[158] though he gives them a clearly secondary character. We can therefore assume that:

– The description we find in the final passage of Chapter 38 of *De administrando imperio* concerns Atelkouzou. This seems to be indicated by the mention that this is the former territory of the Magyars, now inhabited by the Pechenegs. Similar information can also be found in Chapter 40, where the name Atelkouzou is mentioned.
– It is also a description of the entire territory of the Pechenegs, which, according to Constantine VII, stretched in the middle of the 10th century from the Don to the Danube.
– Atelkouzou covered exactly this same area. The origin of this name becomes understandable for us, especially in the light of the last of the passages of *De administrando imperio* quoted above.[159]

The issue of Lebedia's mutual relationship with Atelkouzou, in particular in the light of the findings discussed above, cannot be resolved satisfactorily. In order to remain faithful to my own observations as well as to the account offered by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, I am inclined to look for the first of the lands in the Volga region. From the information contained in *De administrando imperio*, it seems that the *Sabartoi asphaloi* lived in Lebedia and were expelled from it by the *Kangar*-Pechenegs. If this clash took place somewhere in Bashkiria, it is there that the sought-after land should be located. On the

157 DAI, XLII 55–59 (p. 184/185). 'Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Δανούβεως ποταμοῦ μέχρι τοῦ προρρηθέντος κάστρου, τοῦ Σάρκελ ὁδός ἐστιν ἡμερῶν ξ'. Μέσον δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης γῆς ποταμοὶ μέν εἰσιν πολλοί δύο δὲ μέγιστοι ἐξ αὐτῶν ὅ τε Δάναστρις καὶ ὁ Δάναπρις. Εἰσὶ δὲ ἕτεροι ποταμοί, ὅ τε λεγόμενος Συγγοὺλ καὶ ὁ Ὑβὺλ καὶ ὁ Ἀλματαὶ καὶ ὁ Κοῦφις καὶ ὁ Βογοῦ καὶ ἕτεροι πολλοί.'

158 Feher 1959, 308.

159 Similar borders for Atelkouzou (Hungarian: Etelköz) were outlined by Györffy 1975, 287.

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road to such an interpretation, however, stands the impossibility of convincingly deciphering the name of the Chidmas/Chingilous River.

The possibility of locating Lebedia on the Black Sea steppe therefore remains open. If Lebedia was indeed located there, the question arises as to why it was placed next to Atelkouzou in the Hungarian oral tradition. There seems to be one rather important premise that can explain this fact. The memory of Lebedia may reflect the process of the Magyars' migration onto the Black Sea steppe. It cannot be ruled out that at first they occupied a small area east of the Don, but soon extended their rule to the right bank of the Dnieper River. This seems to be evidenced by the reference in the *Annals of Saint Bertin* (*Annales Bertiniani*) to the Magyars' invasion of East Francia, mentioned earlier in reference to Marquart's dating of the first Magyar-Pecheneg clash.[160] Marquart rightly assumed that if the Magyars were able then to carry out a looting expedition targeted at a Western European power, the borders of their homeland had to extend to the Danube delta. It is difficult to imagine such an attack being possible if the aggressor occupied an area east of the Dnieper. Unfortunately, Marquart mistakenly links this event to the Pechenegs' invasion, but his observation is in general quite valuable. We can therefore conclude that the Magyars conquered the entire area comprising Atelkouzou as early as the 860s. This assumption is confirmed by a number of later sources, indicating indirectly that the Magyars occupied the territories in the environs of the Danube.[161] Meanwhile, they maintained their sovereignty over the eastern part of the Black Sea steppe. Lebedia, if it was indeed in the area they controlled, was only part of a much larger territory, yet the Hungarians sought to preserve the memory of their original homelands. To some extent, it is therefore appropriate to agree with Łowmiański that Lebedia could have been a kind of starting point for their excursions. The Pechenegs attacked the Magyars for the second time when the latter already controlled the steppe between the Don and the Danube.

Since we have already taken a stance on a number of controversial issues resulting from the aforementioned passages in *De administrando imperio*, we can therefore attempt now to establish the course of events that led to the establishment of the Pechenegs on the Black Sea steppe. The start of this journey was probably a result of ethnic displacements, in this case caused by the expansion of the Samanid Empire. Around 893 they forced the Oghuz to leave their nomadic settlements and attack their western neighbours, the Pechenegs. The latter, succumbing to the mechanism of the 'migration of peoples', made

160 Marquart 1903, 33. For additional arguments supporting the hypothesis of Magyar expansion onto the Black Sea steppe and beyond: Spinei 2003, 41–42.

161 Cf. Györffy 1975, 287–288.

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an attempt to settle on the territory of the Khazars, which ended in a total failure. Despite this defeat and contrary to Khazar's interests, the Pechenegs managed to cross to the right bank of the Volga at a crossing place that was probably in an area controlled by the Burtas, who were allies of the Khazars but were clearly weaker than them. Information about possible Khazar-Oghuz cooperation against the Pechenegs should be considered unreliable, mainly due to the lack of a motive justifying such a move.

The arrival of the Pechenegs on the Black Sea steppe took place at a rather pivotal moment in history. A war was being fought between Simeon I, the ruler of Bulgaria, and the Byzantine emperor Leo VI (the Wise), father of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Its participants included the inhabitants of Atelkouzou, i.e., the Magyars, who were fighting on the side of Leo VI. When Simeon I found himself in a desperate situation, which we learn about in Chapter 40 of *De administrando imperio*, he decided to call on the Pechenegs for help. Other Byzantine sources do not note this fact,[162] which sometimes leads researchers to accept the premise that the nomadic invasion were carried out on their own initiative.[163] Indeed, the extremely violent nature of events seems to exclude the possibility of the Bulgarians organizing a diplomatic mission aimed at persuading the Pechenegs to fight the Magyars or, more likely, to agree on a joint attack by them and Simeon's troops. The true, or rather unwitting ally, who had just lost his home and was now 'wandering in flight' in search of a new one, had a great motivation to fight that did not have to be reinforced in any way. The Pechenegs were also able to take make good use of the tactical advantage given to them by circumstances. They attacked the Magyars not when they were prepared to repel an attack, but during the absence of their main forces due to a military expedition. The impact of the Pechenegs must have been extremely severe, especially given that Emperor Leo VI abandoned his former allies after entering into a peace agreement with Simeon. As a result, the Magyars were forced to leave their homelands once again, this time the vast lands of Atelkouzou, which the aggressors seized.

Judging by the information contained in Constantine VII's account, this event took place ca. 895. Its significance for the further history of the Pechenegs cannot be overestimated. This steppe people occupied an area that was a place of lively contacts – both commercial and cultural, but above all political – between several countries, of which the most powerful were Byzantium and the Khazar Khaganate.

162 Cf. footnote 101 above.

163 Kristó 1996, 188.

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CHAPTER 4

Structures and Forms of Existence

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with a sphere that is both wide-ranging and extremely hard to define, a sphere usually referred to as culture. It is not possible to ascertain in full the characteristics of the Pechenegs' culture. The fragmentary nature of written and archaeological sources allows us only to outline the most characteristic elements of the culture that grew out of the Pechenegs' nomadic lifestyle and shaped the quality of this steppe people's relations with their settled neighbours.

The Pechenegs remained nomads throughout their existence as an independent people. Their contacts with sometimes highly developed agricultural communities undoubtedly influenced them, but did not radically change their way of life. Neither the starkly different natural conditions of their new home nor close relations with other culturally dissimilar communities – two factors that often put nomadic groups on a path to sweeping cultural change – had a significant impact on Pechenegs until the mid-11th century. We can point to two other nomadic communities, the Volga-Kama and Danube Bulgars, as examples of groups that underwent a process of acculturation and sedentarization due to such factors.

As a result of events which took place in the mid-7th century, the Danube Bulgars were forced to leave the Black Sea steppe and relocate to the Lower Danube. They ultimately settled in today's north-eastern Bulgaria. Recent research shows that the Volga-Kama Bulgars did not reach the mouth of the Kama River, where it flows into the Volga, until the mid-8th century.[1] In their new homelands, both nomadic groups met a settled population whose culture differed from theirs. In the case of the Volga-Kama Bulgars, these were Finno-Ugric peoples living in forests where they hunted and Alano-Sarmatian agricultural communities.[2] The members of the Danube Bulgars led by Asparukh, in turn, came into contact with Slavic agricultural peoples who were dominant in terms of numbers.[3] In both cases, the necessary conditions

1 Cf. Chapter 2 of the present book.

2 Tryjarski 1975 183; Fakhrutdinov 1984, 14–26; Zimonyi 1990, 64–83.

3 Tryjarski 1975, 271–273; Kurnatowska 1977, 89–90; Beshevliev 1981, 179–181; 1984, 60–61; Wasilewski 1988, 35.

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existed for dynamic cultural exchange between the politically dominant but less numerous nomadic groups and the rest of the local population. For both Bulgar groups, a change in their geographical environment played a vitally important role in intensifying the process of sedentarization.[4] This was particularly true for the Volga-Kama Bulgars. When they settled in their new homeland, which was full of forests, swamps, and rivers, they were forced to reduce the role that pastoralism played in their economy. Its place was taken in part by activities that were completely alien to such nomadic communities (e.g., fishing, harvesting honey, etc.).[5] However, this process of acculturation was arduous and progressed slowly. An important role in delaying acculturation, especially in the beginning, was played by the nomads' conscious attempts to maintain their cultural distinction, as well as their hostility towards the indigenous local peoples. The example of the Danube Bulgars shows that the process of overcoming this hostility could take centuries; we can observe a phenomena that allows us to assess the progress of this process only in the early-9th century.[6] Distrust towards outsiders and their cultural milieu sometimes took the form of a cultural conservatism that manifested itself in an attachment to the 'old ways of life', despite the fact that these practices sometimes had no practical value in the new living environment. Yet this conservatism was not absolute and did not rule out the possibility of adopting foreign cultural models.[7] In the case of the Danube Bulgars, a sentiment for their old lifestyle, which seems to have been reflected in hybrid dwellings that combined the features of a yurt and a basin house,[8] was accompanied by a willingness among their elites to incorporate cultural novelties. The second generation of Bulgar monarchs, for example, were already beginning to borrow methods for demonstrating power from the Byzantine empire.[9] Borrowings of this kind were incorporated into their existing pagan system of values. Therefore, the disintegration of their former cultural universe, which could function only in

4 For general information on the sedentarization process in nomadic communities: Khazanov 1978, 119–126; 1984, 198–202; 1990, 1–15. Khazanov describes cultural change in nomads as a case of ecological change *par excellence*.

5 Tryjarski 1975, 192–194; Fakhrutdinov 1984, 27–36.

6 This mainly concerns the internal policies allegedly pursued by Khan Krum (802/803–814), who is believed to have sought to strengthen the role of Slavs in the governance of the Bulgarian State and to place them on an equal footing with the Bulgars. Tryjarski 1975, 276–277; Beshevliev 1981, 264; 1984, 131; Halperin 2007, 88–89.

7 On this phenomenon in general: Paroń 2009, 43–54.

8 These are dated to the 8th and 9th centuries: Waklinow 1984, 93.

9 Atanasov 1999, 32–46; Havliková 1999, 407–420; Stepanov 1998, 247–254; 2001, 6–7, 13; Ziemann 2007, 307–308; Fiedler 2008, 169–188, 191–193, 193–196.

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a steppe milieu, was accompanied by a process of identity formation in which older traditions continued to play a considerable role.

Similar phenomena can be observed in the case of the Volga-Kama Bulgars. Although in the early 10th century their lifestyle became largely sedentary,[10] in the account of Ahmad ibn Fadlan, who visited their capital, we can find a wide range of information that indicates the ruler of Volga-Kama Bulgaria still had strong attachments to his people's former nomadic lifestyle.[11] Therefore, although powerful factors promoting change were at work, the nomads' process of acculturation may have been a slow one and may not have resulted in a complete and immediate rejection of their previous identity.

For the Pechenegs, the chances of experiencing such radical cultural change were more limited. Unlike the Bulgar groups, the geographical conditions in their new surroundings did not differ significantly from their previous home in the Transvolga Region. The Black Sea steppe offered excellent conditions for extensive pastoralism, which comprised the foundation of a nomadic economy.[12] Moreover, their contacts with other cultural communities were much less intensive. Nonetheless, during their time on the Black Sea steppe, the Pechenegs may have subjugated settled communities associated by archaeologists with the Balkan-Danube culture (so-called Dridu culture).[13] The Pechenegs most likely extended their rule over this people, who inhabited western Wallachia and Moldavia. Particularly close contacts might have been established with them in the Lower Dniester region, north of the Danube Delta, from the Lower Prut in the west to the Cogîlnic in the east, and also in the lands between the Prut and Siret Rivers.[14] It cannot be ruled out that the local population provided the nomads with farming products and handicrafts. Some items could have been given as tribute,[15] and others exchanged through barter. It is assumed, however, that factors such as differences in their economy, lifestyle, social organization, and spiritual culture fostered separation between them.[16] The nomads and settled population therefore apparently lived side by side rather than together. While it cannot be ruled out that the two communities developed some sort of *modus vivendi*, the early 11th century marked its

10 Tryjarski 1975, 191.

11 A most remarkable fact is that the ruler of the Volga-Kama Bulgars lived and received foreign emissaries in a yurt. ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 218/219, 228/229; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 41–42, 64.

12 Cf. Chapter 1 of the present book.

13 Diaconu 1975, 235; Spinei 1986, 103.

14 Spinei 1975, 274; 1986, 224, 226 (maps 1–2); Dobroliubskii 1986, 24 (fig. 1).

15 Diaconu 1975, 235; Spinei 1975, 273; 1986, 103.

16 Spinei 1975, 276; 1986, 104.

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end, as the agricultural population began to withdraw to upland and wooded areas that were more difficult for the nomads to reach.[17]

External cultural contacts were facilitated by the fact that the Pechenegs controlled an area that contained important trade routes and shared a border with Byzantium. However, the relations created by these circumstances remained sporadic in nature. In addition, the quality of the contacts between the Pechenegs and neighbouring countries often were not conducive to fruitful cultural exchange. Periods of peaceful cooperation recorded in written sources were interwoven with raids and bloody conflicts. Yet, there is reason to believe that there were instances of close contacts with neighbouring communities. One of the most interesting remarks on this issue comes from a work by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub. He lists a number of peoples, among them the Pechenegs, and claims that they spoke the language of the Slavs due to their close relations with them.[18] This statement is very hard to believe. Perhaps Tadeusz Kowalski was correct when he claimed that this should be interpreted from the perspective of Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, i.e., from the perspective of a merchant. Finding a channel for communication that would make it possible to trade with foreign peoples was therefore of particular importance to him. Ibn Yaqub's remark thus need not be taken to mean that the Pechenegs' mother tongue was a Slavic dialect, but rather that in trade matters it was possible to communicate with them by means of a Slavic language.[19]

It thus seems that as a culturally independent group, the Pechenegs remained nomads. Conditions conducive to cultural change, which ultimately led to their adopting a sedentary lifestyle, did not exist until the mid-11th century, when most of the ethnos had settled in the Byzantine Empire. However, the desire to maintain their old ways of life remained strong even then.[20]

A separate problem is the question of what elements of the nomads' culture determined the quality of their existence and relations with their settled neighbours. It is natural to begin addressing such a question with the issue of the Pechenegs' social and political organization. The survival of any human community exposed to turbulent historical events would most likely be impossible if its members did not establish at least basic socio-political structures. The nomads' strong means of organization, introduced mainly for the sake of carrying out military actions, sometimes gave them an advantage over less

17 Diaconu 1970, 37–48; 1975, 237; Spinei 1975, 274; 1986, 103. Cf. also Chapter 6 of the present book.

18 ibn Yaqub, 52; Mishin 1996, 190.

19 ibn Yaqub, 105 (n. 125).

20 Paroń 2009a, 443–474 and Chapter 7 of the present book.

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organized settled communities.[21] It enabled them to impose political domination over farmers or at least force them to maintain the best possible relations with the belligerent nomads. Meanwhile, the nature of their organization, its efficiency and internal cohesion also determined the shape of their political relations with local powers. The last remark is particularly important in view of the fact that the Pechenegs bordered the Byzantine Empire.

The existence of any community, including a nomadic one, is conditioned by the nature of its economy. Therefore, the type of economy the Pechenegs had needs to be examined. As is the case with most nomads, their economy was dominated by pastoralism, which was accompanied by other, secondary forms of economic activity. Most nomadic communities, including the Pechenegs, were not economically self-sufficient. They were forced to satisfy their demand for products they could not produce themselves either through the exchange of goods or organized plundering.[22] Nomads are often demonized for the level of intensity of these plundering raids. It needs to be remembered that these aggressive actions were often the only means available for overcoming the isolationist tendencies of a neighbouring state or simply an attempt to replenish food supplies, which were at times dramatically scarce.[23] At the same time, it would be difficult to deny, in light of available source data, that the Pechenegs organized plundering raids with relatively regularity.

Another factor that made such a state of affairs possible was the Pechenegs' system of military organization. Bellicosity is a feature attributed to nomads in general. Kazimierz Moszyński claimed that apart from its economic impact, this bellicosity also nourished a specific way of life.[24] Frequent attacks on settled communities, as well as particularly ruthless fighting on the steppe, the aim of which was the complete destruction of the opponent, contributed to the emergence of a specific sociopolitical organization and to the development of an extremely effective method of warfare. In this respect, the nomads sometimes surpassed much larger agricultural communities, whose members both watched the nomads' exploits with horror, and copied their methods of fighting in an effort to resist them more effectively.[25] These general observations

21 Moszyński 1996, 30–31; Golden 2011a, 89–92.

22 Moszyński 1996, 27; Swoboda 1978, 413–14.

23 Cf. Paroń 2013b, 271–283.

24 Moszyński 1996, 26–27.

25 Moszyński 1996, 31. Many very spectacular examples come from China's interactions with the world of the steppe. In the early days of the Han Dynasty (until the 120s BCE), the nomadic Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu) Empire enjoyed military dominance, which led the Chinese court to avoid armed confrontation with the nomads and to pursue a policy of peace, known as *heqin* (ho-ch'in), towards them. It was only after adopting elements of

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apply to the Pechenegs as well. Mounted military formations and the types of weapons typical of nomads became popular in Rus' as a result of encounters, or rather clashes, with the Pechenegs.[26] Due to their military skills, small groups of the Pechenegs were enlisted into service by Byzantine emperors, as well as by Rus' and Hungarian rulers.[27] Ultimately, and most importantly for our considerations, the bellicosity of the Pechenegs laid the foundations for their political significance.

The last, fourth part of this chapter is devoted to phenomena that shaped the feeling of community among the Pechenegs, contributed to the creation of a system of values universally recognized by this group, and constructed the image of these nomads in the eyes of their settled neighbours. Such factors strengthened the ethnic bond shared by members of this community and shaped a kind of nomadic ethos, thereby determining to a large extent the political actions undertaken by the Pechenegs. These factors also influenced their attitude towards neighbouring peoples, defined the value of the Pechenegs as a political partner for potential allies, and strengthened their sense of solidarity, which was of extreme importance when the ethnos as a whole or in part came under threat.

4.2 Political and Social Organization

The shape of the social and political organization of a particular community is of fundamental importance to understanding its history. Discussing this subject, however, is akin to walking through a minefield. There are numerous pitfalls awaiting any researcher who deals with historical societies. The first of these is terminology. Every scientific language needs one, but it is hard to resist the impression that today's language of description of past social structures has undergone far-ranging deconstruction. As a result of criticism of the evolutionary paradigm, the category of the state in particular has lost much of its significance. First of all, it has ceased to be an acid test for the level of development of a specific community. The state is also no longer perceived as a

Xiongnu's military policies (especially the use of large-scale cavalry) that the Han were able to introduce a bellicose foreign policy (Di Cosmo 2002, 229–247). Likewise, in the times of the late Sui Dynasty and early Tang Dynasty (7th century), resistance to Turkish invasions became effective following the creation of elite cavalry units, which were fully "Turkified", meaning they fought using the methods as the steppe-dwellers. (Li Jinxiu 2014, 66–74).

26 Szymański 1973, 126–131.

27 Tryjarski 1975a, 519–520. Cf. also Chapter 7 of the present book.

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necessary institution, nor as a guarantee of a community's successful continuation. Human communities have sometimes achieved a high level of development (e.g., the Greek *polis*) despite the lack of distinct state structures.[28] We find ourselves at this point entering into a hopeless discussion on the definition of a state, i.e., a discussion that has no chance of being resolved. We can accept the pragmatic observation that an excessive widening of the definition of a state leads to the conclusion that any political organization of a human community is essentially a state, which results in a complete loss of the term's value as an analytical category.[29] However, it is also impossible not to notice that a precise definition of the term is extremely difficult, if not impossible. A universal definition covering all civilizations and epochs most likely simply does not exist. Such the case, phrases like 'pre-state community' and 'pre-state organism' lose their meaning entirely.

A separate issue is the problem of statehood in nomads. This discussion has been ongoing for many decades, and seems to have yielded two basic positions. The representatives of the first of these positions are inclined to claim that nomadic communities are not capable of creating states. At best, they form empires, which are externally dangerous and perfectly suited for expansion and exerting pressure on neighbouring political entities, but internally possess a loose federal or tribal structure.[30] Representatives of the opposing view believe that nomads are not inferior to other communities when it comes to their capacity for state-building.[31] This view can be maintained only with a very broad definition of the category of the state, which, especially in view of the fragmentary nature of sources, may result in almost every political organism of nomads being considered a state. It seems that taking into account the specificity of the steppe world, the least controversial solution would be to use the category of 'early state', i.e., a political structure with a clearly defined centre, in which all the institutions typical of a mature state apparatus have not yet been created, or are merely embryonic in character.[32] Such transitional

28 Bravo, Wipszycka 1988, 133–138; Bondarenko, Korotayev, Kradin 2003, 6. The authors of the latter study remind us that organisms of the *polis-civitas* type were neither merely an ancient phenomenon, nor a European one. Moreover, they seem to have been quite numerous, meaning they cannot be viewed as a systemic anomaly.

29 Tymowski 2009, 12–13.

30 Markov 1976, 312–313; Barfield 1992, 7–8; 1993, 149–151; Kradin 1992, 152; 2002, 244–246; Kradin, Skrynnikova 2006, 50.

31 Sneath 2007, 21–37.

32 Claessen, Skalník 1978, 3–27; Khazanov 1978a, 77–92; Skalník 1978, 597–618; Claessen, Skalník 1978a, 619–635; Khazanov 1981, 155–175; Claessen, Skalník 1981, 469–510; Khazanov 1984, 228–233, 295–302. The concept of an early state in nomad societies is sometimes opposed with the concept of a supercomplex chiefdom, used to describe the structure of

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formations were created relatively often by Eurasian steppe nomads. A feature specific to them, however, was their lack of stability. The status of a mature state seems to have been achieved only by nomadic cultures that had already moved off the steppe.[33]

In modern academic discourse, use of the categories of 'clan' and 'tribe', once very important for describing social and political structures, have been largely repudiated. Together with these terms, the notion of 'clan-tribal system' and 'patriarchal and clan system' have also lost their value. This terminological crisis seems to have resulted, at least to some extent, from the abandonment of the evolutionary paradigm. So-called pre-state societies, whose political existence was framed within one of the above-mentioned 'systems', were frequently compared to societies 'already' functioning within state structures. Nevertheless, notions like 'clan' and 'tribe', condemned by some researchers, continue to be commonly used. In fact, we seem to be dealing not so much with their abandonment, as with their redefinition.[34]

Written sources provide much information on the sociopolitical organization of historical communities, but these pronouncements are tainted by subjectivism and bias – which in the case of nomadic communities is extremely common – having been prepared by foreign authors, i.e., individuals not belonging to the community described. However, this merely burdens the researcher with the obligation of having to try to decipher the conceptual apparatus used in a specific text and, afterward, reconstructing a fragment of the social reality it describes. The existence of certain notions does not, of course, determine their actual meaning. In other words, the fact the a specific author notices the presence of certain sociopolitical organizational units, the name of which allows us to associate them with categories commonly used in anthropology (e.g., 'clan' and 'tribe'), does not in itself determine the basis of these

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the so-called steppe empires. The latter were not states, because they had not yet managed to create a fully developed administrative apparatus, only its foundations (cf. Kradin 2002a, 372–373; Kradin, Skrynnikova 2006, 50–51). It should be noted, first of all, that such a definition of a supercomplex chiefdom makes it a concept very close to that of an early state. Nikolai Kradin and Tatiana Skrynnikova called it a 'state prototype (*proobraz*)'. This means in practice that it is very difficult to distinguish between the two political organisms. A supercomplex chiefdom seems to have been an entity that could only exist in scholarly discussions, as another 'degree of abstraction' between the well-rooted categories of chiefdom and an early state.

33 Khazanov 1984, 228–232; Di Cosmo 1994, 1115–1118; 1999, 20–28.

34 Lindner 1982, 689–711. The researcher assumes that a nomadic tribe is simply a political organism in which blood kinship is no longer meaningful. The tribe is understood as the basic political structure of nomads. Its size is unimportant; the empires of the European Huns and the Ottoman Turks are tribes as well.

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organizational units.[35] In addition to political and historical factors *par excellence*, such as common interest as a factor leading to the formation of alliances between previously separate groups, or simply the conquest of the weaker by the stronger, we should at least in theory allow for the principle of kinship. This concept most likely did not provide the foundation for large political organisms. The 'idiom of kinship' in these was in fact a tool for communicating the order created within the political process. The terminology associated with this notion was therefore not an organizing principle, but a secondary phenomenon, reflecting the existing system of interests and hierarchies. It seems, however, that at the lowest, most basic levels of social organization, real blood relationships, rather than fictitious one, played a very important role among nomads. Finally, it is worth remembering that in the political organisms of steppe people, real (blood) kinship or affinity sometimes acquired political significance as a tool for consolidating alliances between individual aristocratic families.[36]

The Pechenegs will therefore be described, above all, as a political organism shaped and modified by historical events. Groups of people of different origins could belong to this organism; however, the principle that united them was political in character. In order to understand this principle, it is necessary to refer to primary sources, supplemented by comparative materials concerning other Eurasian steppe groups.

A fortunate circumstance is the fact that the sociopolitical organization of the Pechenegs was described in some detail in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' *De administrando imperio*. An additional propitious factor is the emperor's keen interest in the sociopolitical structures of nomads, resulting from his plans in relation to them. This data is probably quite reliable, although it does not contain the native names of the individual units of the Pechenegs' system of social organization, but instead uses (sometimes quite surprising) Greek terms. This means that it is necessary to take a closer look at them and then compare them with what is generally known about the sociopolitical systems of steppe peoples.

35 In one of his works, Peter B. Golden seems to reject David Sneath's criticism of traditional concepts. Golden is right that some of them simply come from written sources, but this does not mean they do not require detailed analysis and, if necessary, redefinition. Sneath, on the other hand, sometimes seems to assume that the mere use of traditional names of socio-political entities by a particular researcher is tantamount to accepting their former meaning, related to now outdated concepts, uncritically. Golden 2011, 17 (n. 1); Sneath 2007, 2.

36 Markov 1976, 310–311; Lindner 1982, 696–700; Khazanov 1984, 138–144; Barfield 1992, 26–27.

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To describe all Pechenegs and individual units of their political organism Constantine VII uses the following terms: *ethnos* (τὸ ἔθνος), *laos* (ὁ λαός) and *genea* (ἡ γενεά), while for units of their territorial organization he uses: *thema* (τὸ θέμα) and *meros* (τὸ μέρος).

Clarifying the scope of the meaning of the first of these terms does not pose too great a problem. Constantine VII uses *ethnos* [ἔθνος] when he means the whole people. In the first chapter of *De administrando imperio* we read:

> Ὅτι γειτνιάζει τὸ τοιοῦτον ἔθνος τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν τῷ μέρει τῆς Χερσῶνος, [...].[37]
>
> This nation [ἔθνος] of the Pechenegs is neighbour to the district of Cherson, [...].

Similarly, in the Title of Chapter 37:

> Περὶ τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν[38]
>
> Of the nation [ἔθνος] of the Pechenegs

The second term, ὁ λαός, is somewhat more difficult. It is used four times in relation to the Pechenegs, for the first time in Chapter 4:

> Ὅτι καὶ ἕτερος λαὸς τῶν τοιούτων Πατζινακιτῶν τῷ μέρει τῆς Χερσῶνος παράκεινται, [...].[39]
>
> Yet another folk [λαὸς] of these Pechenegs lies over against the district of Cherson [...].

Then again in Chapter 8:

> Ὅτι καὶ ες τὸ μέρος τῆς Βουλγαρίας καθέζεται λαὸς τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν, ἐπὶ τὸ μέρος τοῦ Δάναπρι καὶ τοῦ Δάναστρι καὶ τῶν ἑτέρων τῶν ἐκεῖσε ὄντων ποταμῶν.[40]

37 DAI, I 25–26 (p. 48/49).
38 DAI, XXXVII 1 (p. 166/167).
39 DAI, VI 2–3 (p. 52/53).
40 DAI, VIII 5–7 (p. 54/55).

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> In the region of Bulgaria also is settled a folk [λαὸς] of the Pechenegs, toward the region of the Dnieper and Dniester and the other rivers of those parts.

In Chapter 37:

> Ἰστέον, ὅτι καὶ Κάγγαρ ὀνομάζονται οἱ Πατζινακῖται, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάντες, πλὴν ὁ τῶν τριῶν θεμάτων λαός, τοῦ Ἰαβδιηρτὶ καὶ τοῦ Κουαρτζιτζοὺρ καὶ τοῦ Χαβουξιγγυλά, ὡς ἀνδρειότεροι καὶ εὐγενέστεροι τῶν λοιπῶν· [...].[41]
>
> The Pechenegs are also called 'Kangar', though not all of them, but only the folk [λαὸς] of the three provinces of Iabdierti and Kouartzitzour and Chabouxingyla, for they are more valiant and noble than the rest [...].

The term also appears a second time in Chapter 8. This time Constantine Porphyrogenitus quotes a statement about the Pechenegs by the Magyars, who say 'they cannot fight them, because their country is great and their people numerous' [λαὸς πολὺς].[42] The juxtaposition of contexts in which the term λαὸς is used seems to indicate that the scholarly emperor applies it in a rather inconsistent manner. It may mean a part of the Pecheneg people, but it may also mean its entirety. To some extent it seems to be synonymous with the word *ethnos* [ἔθνος], although the latter is used much more consistently, always towards the whole people.

An analysis of the third term, ἡ γενεά, brings interesting results. In Chapter 37, we find the following passage:

> Ἰστέον, ὅτι αἱ τέσσαρες τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν γενεαί, ἤγουν τὸ θέμα Κουαρτζιτζοὺρ καὶ τὸ θέμα Συρουκαλπέη καὶ τὸ θέμα Βοροταλμὰτ καὶ τὸ θέμα Βουλατζοπόν, κεῖνται πέραν τοῦ Δανάπρεως ποταμοῦ πρὸς τὰ ἀνατολικώτερα καὶ βορειότερα μέρη, ἐναποβλέποντα πρός τε Οὐζίαν καὶ Χαζαρίαν καὶ Ἀλανίαν καὶ τὴν Χερσῶνα καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ κλίματα.[43]

41 DAI, XXXVII 68–71 (p. 170/171).

42 DAI, VIII 29–33 (p. 56/57). Ἡμεῖς μετὰ τοὺς Πατζινακίτας ἑαυτοὺς οὐ βάλλομεν· οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθα πολεμεῖν πρὸς αὐτούς, ὅτι καὶ χώρα μεγάλη καὶ *λαὸς πολὺς* καὶ κακὰ παιδία εἰσίκαὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον πρὸς ἡμᾶς μὴ εἰπῇς οὐ γὰρ ἀγαπῶμεν αὐτόν.

43 DAI, XXXVII 34–39 (p. 168/169).

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> Four clans [γενεαί] of the Pechenegs, that is to say, the province of Kouartzitzour and the province of Syroukalpei and the province of Borotalmat and the province of Boulatzopon, lie beyond the Dnieper river towards the eastern and northern parts that face Uzia and Chazaria and Alania and Cherson and the rest of the Regions.

The author further states that four other *geneai* live in an area west of the Dnieper River. In the light of the above example of *geneai* (sg. *genea*), it should be recognized as a higher unit in the Pechenegs' social organization. Each is clearly determined by territory and has its own name. The term also appears in a text that described events from the mid-11th century, i.e., 100 years after Constantine Porphyrogenitus' account. In the *Chronicle* of John Skylitzes, we read:

> Διήρηται δὲ εἰς τρισκαίδεκα γενεάς, αἵτινες καλοῦνται μὲν πᾶσαι τῷ κοινῷ ὀνόματι, ἔχουσι δ' ἑκάστη καὶ ἴδιον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑαυτῆς προγόνου καὶ ἀρχηγοῦ τὴν προσηγορίαν κληρωσαμένη.[44]
>
> They [Pechenegs] are divided into thirteen tribes [γενεάς] all of which have the same name in common but each has its own proper name inherited from its own ancestor and chieftain.

This extremely interesting information poses a number of difficulties for the researcher. We cannot assume in advance that Constantine Porphyrogenitus and John Skylitzes are using analogous terminology. This need not be excluded, but there are reasons to remain sceptical. The older author mentions eight large units in the Pecheneg organization, while the younger one lists 13. The scholarly *basileus* does not know about the alleged origin of the names of these units from the names of some ancestor-protagonist.

The term *genea* in the context of the sociopolitical organization of the Pechenegs also appears in the *Scylitzes Continuatus*. Here it refers to a later period, when the steppe people already inhabited the Balkan provinces of Byzantium. The author claims that the entire population was divided into *geneai* and *fratriai* (sg. φρατρία), but does not give their number.[45] This extremely laconic information allows us to assume that the last term, not mentioned anywhere else in relation to the Pechenegs, may correspond to some social organizational unit below the level of *genea*.

44 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 34–37). Cf. Wortley 2010, 426.

45 Scyl.Cont., 107.

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The discrepancy between the information in the writings of Constantine VII and John Skylitzes can be explained by the time interval between the two accounts. Over the course of this roughly 100-year period, the Pechenegs experienced a series of severe disasters, which likely affected, if not devastated, their sociopolitical organism.[46] *Geneai* – its highest level in the times of Constantine VII – may simply have ceased to exist or underwent far-reaching transformations in the first decades of the 11th century, after the series of defeats the Pechenegs suffered in battles with the Uzes. They would, therefore, not be the same as the 13th *geneai* from the period preceding the Pechenegs' departure from the Black Sea steppe, which is the subject of Skylitzes' account. The author does give the names of only two of these *geneai*: *Pagumanis* (Παγουμανίς) and *Belemarnis* (Βελεμαρνίς).[47] None of these were known to Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

References to comparative materials only provides a half-way solution. In general, it is assumed that there were two or three levels of socio-political organization among nomad peoples, composed of relevant taxonomic units.[48] Among the Altai steppe people there was a unit called a *bone* (Tur. sünjük~sönjük~süök, Mong. *yasun*), synonymous with the Slavic *ród* or English *clan*. Its members claimed shared family ties between them and their descent from a common ancestor. The last circumstance was to supposed ensure that its boundaries were precisely defined, so it was thus originally an agnatic unit, quite closed and very close-knit, and therefore stable.[49] In addition to the *bones* of nomadic societies, there was also a larger unit of social organization called an *omuq* in Old Turkic, and in Mongolian *oboγ*. Its equivalents is the notion of *tribe* (Ger. *Stamm*). The *omuq/oboγ*, unlike *bones*, however, was a much less stable entity. Blood relations did not play an important role in it as a binding force, and its continuation was determined by common economic and political interests. It could therefore disintegrate or merge into larger organizational units much more easily than a *bone*.[50] Unfortunately, the relationship between the two entities is unclear. This is because members of the same *bone* could simultaneously belong to various *Omuq/oboγ*.[51] In addition, according to some

46 Cf. in particular Chapter 6 of the present book.

47 Io.Scyl., 456 (v. 59–60).

48 Moszyński 1996, 53; Khazanov 1984, 132–138. The latter scholar calls them communities of primary/second/third order. However, not all nomadic communities featured all three levels of organization. It is usually assumed that the existence of three levels of social organization is reflective of state organisms. Cf. Carneiro 1981, 45–46.

49 Kotwicz 1949, 160–161; Kałużyński 1970, 39–40; Tryjarski 1975a, 567. Cf. Pritsak 1952, 60.

50 Kotwicz 1949, 161; Kałużyński 1970, 40; Tryjarski 1975a, 567.

51 Kotwicz 1949, 161; Krader 1963, 324.

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researchers, only part of a community, that with an aristocratic background, could be identified as belonging to a particular *bone*.[52] Tatiana Skrynnikova, in her description of the sociopolitical structure of the Mongols in the times of Genghis Khan and in the period immediately preceding him, posited the existence of two types units organizing an *ethnos*: *urug* and *obog*. The first one is described by the researcher as lineage, the second is a clan. A combination of *urug* formed units of a higher order, such as an *obog*, but they could also easily detach themselves and give rise to a new clan.[53] Thus, the observations of the Russian researcher correspond to the common conviction among researchers of nomadic societies of the fundamental importance of family structures in the sociopolitical organization of nomads. This is because the daily life of nomads takes place within these units. They also form the basis for their economic existence as a common nomadic group and for grazing cattle. However, they acquire political importance only within larger units.[54]

References made in these general observations to source data leads to the cautious conclusion that the *genea* as a taxonomic unit in *De administrando imperio* may be identical to that of John Skylitzes. The failures experienced by the Pechenegs at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries most likely led to the devastation of the largest units of their political organization. In the new conditions, however, the place of *geneai* was not taken by smaller units, which we will call 'clans', but rather by a transformation of the structure of the whole ethnos and the emergence of 13 new *geneai*, instead of the previous eight.

The information in *De administrando imperio* indicates a strong link between the sociopolitical organization and territorial divisions of the Pechenegs, which was already noted above. Their entire territory consisted of eight units, each with a name identical to that of a *genea*. These units were described by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus as *thema* (τὸ θέμα), as we read again in Chapter 37 of his work:

> Ἰστέον, ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ Πατζινακία εἰς θέματα ὀκτὼ διαιρεῖται, ἔχουσα καὶ μεγάλους ἄρχοντας τοσούτους. Τὰ δὲ θέματά εἰσιν ταῦτα· ὄνομα τοῦ πρώτου θέματος Ἠρτήμ, τοῦ δευτέρου Τζούρ, τοῦ τρίτου Γύλα, τοῦ τετάρτου Κουλπέη, τοῦ πέμπτου Χαραβόη, τοῦ ἕκτου Ταλμάτ, τοῦ ἑβδόμου Χοπόν, τοῦ ὀγδόου Τζοπόν.[55]

52 Sneath 2007, 171–172.

53 Skrynnikova 2011, 458–459. Cf. also Igor de Rachewiltz's comments in: 2004, I, 249–250.

54 Moszyński 1996, 52–53; Khazanov 1984, 126–128 (the scholar does not use the term 'family', but instead 'primary kin group'); Szyjewski 2001, 414.

55 DAI, XXXVII 15–19 (p. 166/167).

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> The whole Patzinacia is divided into eight provinces [θέματα] with the same number of great princes. The provinces [θέματά] are these: the name of the first province [θέματος] is Irtim; of the second, Tzour; of the third, Gyla; of the fourth, Koulpeï; of the fifth, Charaboï; of the sixth, Talmat; of the seventh, Chopon; of the eighth, Tzopon.

A researcher's interest is sure to be awakened by the use of the Byzantine term *thema* by Constantine VII to name a territorial unit of the Pechenegs' lands. By the mid-10th century, *thema* already had a long history. The beginning of the reform that made it the basis of Byzantium's administrative and military structure is traditionally attributed to Emperor Heraclius. By the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, the *thema* system had reached its mature form.[56] During the reign of Constantine VII it was still the foundation for the functioning of the state, so use of the term to describe divisions in the territory of the Pechenegs could not have been merely accidental. This seems all the more improbable given the fact that the author uses different terms in relation to the territorial organization of other peoples described in *De administrando imperio*. Describing the relationship between the Alans and the Khazars, he states:

> Ὅτι τὰ ἐννέα κλίματα τῆς Χαζαρίας τῇ Ἀλανίᾳ παράκεινται, [...].[57]
>
> Nine regions [κλίματα] of Chazaria are adjacent to Alania [...].

If the term *thema* is applied to the territorial organization of the Pechenegs, it should be given clear, distinctive features. The question then arises: what did Constantine VII intend to focus on? The state of our knowledge does not allow us to go beyond the sphere of conjecture. However, it seems that two possible explanations need to be pointed out. First, the *basileus* wanted to highlight the very strong relationship between the military and territorial organization of the Pechenegs. Such an assumption is validated by other information given about them as well as by comparative data about the culture of steppe peoples. Second, the learned emperor may have been particularly interested in demonstrating the efficiency and coherence of the Pechenegs' means of organization, which could serve as an analogy for the administrative system of the Byzantine Empire. If we take into account the fact that Constantine VII linked specific political plans with the Pechenegs, which he expressed in the first chapter of

56 Ensslin 1964, 356–357. Ostrogorski 1967, 215; Lilie 1984, 27–39, 190–201; Kazhdan 1991a, 2034–2035. On the meaning of the term 'thema': Koder 1990, 155–165.

57 DAI, X 5 (p. 64/65).

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his work, then it is not too difficult to find a motive for such a course of action. This does not mean, however, that the Emperor distorted reality for the sake of his diplomatic doctrine.

Constantine VII also mentions the existence of lower-level territorial organization units among the Pechenegs. This is indicated by the following passage:

> Τὰ δὲ ὀκτὼ θέματα διαιροῦνται εἰς τεσσαράκοντα μέρη, καὶ ἔχουσι καὶ ἐλάττοντας ἄρχοντας.[58]
>
> The eight provinces [θέματα] are divided into forty districts [μέρη], and these have minor princelings over them.

If we take into account the fact that the tribe (*genea*) corresponded to the *thema* on the level of the Pechenegs' social organization, then, based on analogy, we can assume that a smaller territorial organizational unit (τὸ μέρος) should correspond to some social unit. Unfortunately, we do not know its name, which makes it very difficult to find analogies among the data concerning other nomadic peoples. It cannot be ruled out that it corresponded to the clan.

In the mid-10th century, the Pecheneg *ethnos* therefore consisted of eight large socio-political units, which in turn were broken down into forty smaller ones. Within each *genea* there were probably five smaller units.[59] This type of organization was overlapped by the territorial division of the whole of Patzinacia, according to which four *geneai* lived in the area west of the Dnieper River (Giazichopon, Kato Gyla, Charaboï, and Iabdiertim) and the remaining four to the east (Kouartzitzour, Syrukoulpeï, Borotalmat, and Boulatzopon).[60] This division, whose axis was the Dnieper, very much resembles the two-wing *toliš-tarduš* system, attested for many steppe-based political organisms. It is also a typical element of the military organization of nomadic groups.[61]

It is difficult to say how long the Pecheneg sociopolitical organization existed in the shape outlined here. It is highly probable, however, that the events of the turn of the 10th and 11th century, i.e., the Pechenegs' failures in their fight against Rus' and, above all, pressure from the Uzes, seriously strained it. The loss of settlement areas to the east of the Dnieper most certainly compromised

58 DAI, XXXVII 32–33 (p. 166/167).
59 A similar interpretation was adopted by Pletneva 1958, 192.
60 DAI, XXXVII 34–45 (p. 168).
61 Tryjarski 1975a, 571; Pritsak 1975, 218.

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its territorial basis, which was then accompanied by demographic losses. These phenomena caused the aforementioned transformation of the *geneai*.

Fragmentary source data makes it difficult to describe relations within particular units of the Pechenegs' social organization. However, we can assume that the same factors that led to social stratification within other nomadic ethne were also influential here. Despite the formal egalitarianism strongly emphasized and cultivated among nomads,[62] the political primacy of certain individuals and sub-groups is clearly visible among them. The sources of such a state of affairs can be found in two phenomena: differences in terms of wealth and a hierarchy of prestige in terms of both individuals and entire groups.[63] In the case of nomadic communities, the source of differences in wealth was mainly the size of herds. The phenomenon of land ownership was practically non-existent on the steppe.[64] Wealth, although important as a determinant of prestige, is not the only source of it. A telling example is that of Temujin, who was born the heir of several yurts, and later stripped of all his property and degraded to the status of an outcast, but died as the creator of an enormous empire. His life is therefore the best illustration of the relative value of wealth and the immense role of charisma in the life of a steppe leader.[65]

The mechanism of significant fluctuations in wealth in nomadic communities resulted, according to experts on the subject, from the specificity of the steppe economy, which was based on pastoralism. Natural disasters, among which very harsh winters were most important, could significantly reduce the size of herds. For rich nomads, this usually resulted in a significant reduction in their wealth, while for those of average and lesser means it meant the loss of their means of subsistence and a fall to the lower reaches of the social scale.[66] Robbery was also a phenomenon that brought about significant changes in ownership. As a result of regular looting raids, steppe people could get rich or,

62 Moszyński 1996, 34–35; Khazanov 1984, 153–157.

63 Cf. Pritsak 1952, 52–53. The hierarchy of tribes proposed by the Pritsak concerns mainly large steppe empires. Therefore caution is required when applying it to smaller political organisms. Cf. Khazanov 1984, 152. He points to private ownership of livestock and one's place in the social structure as sources of social diversity.

64 Markov 1976, 298–300; Khazanov 1984, 123–126; Nowicka 2001, 327, 329.

65 *The Secret History of the Mongols* describes Temüjin as one with '[…] fire in his eyes, […] light in his face'. This type of formulation is said to be a typical topos in Mongolian oral literature used to indicate a person with extraordinary intellectual and spiritual qualities. Rachewiltz 2004, I, 14, 24, 327–328. It is also characteristic of a charismatic personality. Charisma (Turkic: *qut*, Persian: *hvarena*) was often imagined and presented as a ray of light. Cf. Golden 2006, 44.

66 Moszyński 1996, 36; Khazanov 1984, 73–76; Gumilow 1997, 12–13.

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in the case of an attack by another ethnos, lose almost everything.[67] Military activity triggered another noteworthy phenomenon. As a group undertaking, military activity required the existence of an efficient command that would ensure its success. A similar state of affairs promoted talented nomads, whose military and plundering successes had becoming a source of considerable prestige and, consequently, an opportunity to attain political power. We are dealing here with a phenomenon that Omeljan Pritsak described as 'charisma'. As he achieved successive victories, a leader endowed with such charisma gathered faithful and devoted warriors around him. In this way, a relationship was formed that resembled the Germanic *Männerbund*. The success of the leader was interpreted in religious terms as a special gift and mandate from Heaven (*Täŋri*). The mechanism described by Pritsak is extremely important for understanding the origins of many steppe empires. Their creators were often small groups of nomads headed by a charismatic leader.[68]

As a result of the impact of the combination of factors described above, a group of nomads was formed who enjoyed greater importance and respect than other members of their ethnos. Social and economic relations of this type may have resulted in a form of clientelism.[69] An additional factor conducive to the enlargement of a dependent population were invasions, during which prisoners of war were abducted.[70] A large part of these prisoners was usually sold off, but those who remained among the nomads could soon become members of the new community, although they remained dependent on their patrons.[71]

From Pritsak's research we know that the hierarchy of tribes (the second phenomenon of interest to us) consisted of four traditional categories: ruling tribes, voluntarily affiliated (brother-in-law) tribes, tribute-paying tribes, and finally, conquered tribes, which were deprived of all rights.[72] As has already

67 Moszyński 1996, 36.

68 Pritsak 1952, 51; 1988, 750, 751–753; Golden 2006, 42–44; Geary 2012a, 47.

69 Moszyński 1996, 29–30; Szymański 1979, 93; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 82–83; Khazanov 1984, 157–159.

70 Moszyński 1996, 30; Dąbrowski 1975, 103; Szymański 1979, 93.

71 Cf. the very interesting example of a merchant from Viminatium described by Priscos of Panion. Abducted by the Huns, he was to become the property of Onegesios, Attila's trusted minister, as part of the booty. Later, however, he stood out in battles with the Romans and the Akatziri, regained his freedom and married a barbarian woman. According to Byzantine diplomat's accounts, he valued his status among the barbarians much more than his former position in the empire. He also remained, what is significant, a member of the household of Onegesios. Priskos states that he ate at his table (Ὀνηγησίῳ τραπέζης κοινωνοῦντα). Prisc., 11.2 (p. 266–268). For more on slavery among nomads in general: Khazanov 1984, 160.

72 Pritsak 1952, 52–53; Swoboda 1978, 412; Tryjarski 1975, 302.

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been discussed, the shape of this hierarchy was a consequence of the history of a given steppe-based political organism. The founding groups, those which had been part of it the longest, enjoyed the greatest prestige. The combination of phenomena described above determined the shape of relations within a given political organism.

Despite the relative scarcity of sources, it seems that some of these general observations can also be applied to the specific case of the Pechenegs. The fact that there were property differences within their communities can be deduced from accounts associated with the Jayhānī tradition. These authors (al-Bakrī, al-Gardīzī and al-Marwazī) agree that the Pechenegs were wealthy, possessing large flocks, gold and silver dishes, and silver belts and weapons.[73] This affluence was most likely not spread evenly among all the members of the ethnos. The lion's share was probably in the hands of the elite. This assumption seems to confirmed by information from Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who in the second chapter of *De administrando imperio* reports that the Pechenegs sold horned cattle, sheep and horses to Rus'.[74] In another place he mentions the existence of a commodity exchange operated by the inhabitants of Byzantine Kherson for purposes of trading with the Pechenegs.[75] Both examples indicate quite clearly that surpluses occurred in the Pechenegs' economy and that these later became objects of trade. In all probability such surpluses belonged to the richer members of the group, as it is hard to imagine that an average member of the community would sell part of his herd, which provided the means of existence for him and his family. A surplus sufficient to allow for trade was thus most easily obtained by the owner of a larger herd of livestock.

Archaeological materials provide weak documentation of the differences in wealth among the Pechenegs. Their material culture is known mainly from the inventories of burial sites, which raises the question of to what extent funeral practices reflected differences in social status and wealth. Funeral ceremonies usually provide an opportunity to manifest the social prestige of the deceased. In this respect, nomads were no exception, although their attempts to conceal the burial site of significant personalities for fear of profanation and robbery have also been confirmed.[76] Material traces of these burial sites, in spite of hav-

73 Gardīzī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 165. Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250. Zakhoder 1967, 74.

74 DAI, II 6–8 (p. 50).

75 DAI, VI (pp. 52–53); LIII 530–532 (p. 286). Cf. the part of this chapter dedicated to the economy.

76 Roux 1984, 263–280; 1988, 528. The researcher does not question the fact that some steppe peoples (e.g., Mongols) concealed graves out of fear of robbery and desecration, but he

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ing been protected against their contemporaries, nevertheless remain. In the case of the Pechenegs, thus far only so-called 'secondary' burial mounds have been discovered, i.e., those dug into the banks of old burial mounds, usually from prehistoric eras. The inventory of steppe grave sites is generally relatively poor. Nevertheless, some researchers have tried to prove the existence of distinctions in property among the Pechenegs on their basis. Svetlana A. Pletneva has pointed out that more valuable weapons (e.g., sabres) have been found in only a few Pecheneg grave sites.[77] Economic differentiation is also said to be evidenced by differences in the amount of horse remains discovered in graves. A full skeleton, a very rare finding, would be testimony to great wealth, while an incomplete skeleton would indicate the lower status of the person buried.[78] Interpretations of this kind, however, are not convincing. This data seems to indicate in fact a rather low level of economic diversification among the Pechenegs. In the light of the material remains of funeral rituals, they appear to have been a rather egalitarian society with small, relatively poorly manifested social differences among its members.

Interesting data concerning the nature of relations within the Pecheneg community can be found in the writings of al-Bakrī. He states that the Pechenegs made a proposal to prisoners from Byzantium, but also from other lands, to stay with them as equal members of their community who had the right to take one of its women as a wife. If he rejected such an offer, they would take him safely to the border of their lands.[79] The quoted fragment does not necessarily come from the lost work of al-Jayhānī, as is indicated by the lack of an analogous passage in the works of al-Gardīzī, al-Marwazī and ibn Rusta. It most likely concerns the Black Sea period of the Pechenegs' history. Pletneva considers this report to be proof of the existence of nomadic feudalism among them,[80] but it would be safer to talk about some form of clientelism. A prisoner who did not have any means of subsistence was only formally made a full member of the community. His continued existence depended on his patron, who could provide him with decent living conditions for the services he received from him. It is also worth considering whether the Pechenegs

points out that their location was often widely known because they were places of worship. According to Roux, workers who worked on the construction of graves and funeral rites were killed because they were sullied.

77 Pletneva 1958, 197; 1981, 215.

78 Pletneva 2003, 158. Cf. Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 69, 82–93 (the data refer to areas east of Volga); Atavin 2008, 78 (interprets this similar diversity of funeral rites as a deliberate manifestation of a separate ethnic identity).

79 Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 60; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 223–224.

80 Pletneva 1958, 193.

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made such an offer to every refugee who came to them. It seems reasonable, although not supported by the source data, to assume that such an offer was mainly addressed to those with special skills who for some reason were valuable to the Pechenegs.[81] Unfortunately, we are not able to go beyond conjecture about what kind of qualifications would make them so valuable for the nomads. Perhaps they were highly specialized craftsmen or possessed some kind of military skills that were not commonly found among the Pechenegs.[82] Another hypothesis should also be taken into account, according to which the prisoners were individuals thanks to whom the Pechenegs would be able to establish contact with neighbouring states. Their origins guarantees a knowledge of a potential political partner, and they could serve as translators or intermediaries in the formation of alliances.[83]

Most importantly, however, al-Bakri's account provides evidence that seems to confirm the existence of a group of wealthy people capable of providing for the subsistence of a valuable prisoner-of-war. The resulting dependence, in turn, opened the path for the creation of a kind of patron elite that could increase its political significance thanks to the support of its clients.

At the other end of this social system were the people dependent on their patrons. The appearance of such people among the Pechenegs resulted from multiple causes. Some clients, as we have seen, were former prisoners-of-war, while others were impoverished steppe-dwellers.

There is no doubt that both large and small units in the Pechenegs' system of social organization had their own leaders. Constantine VII claims they were headed by 'chieftains' (ἄρχοντες). At the same time, he emphasizes the difference in quality between them, adding the nicknames of 'great chieftains' (μεγάλοι) of *geneai* and 'lesser chieftains' (ἐλάττονες) who led 'clans'.[84] The Emperor also describes the mechanism of succession within larger units. We learn that upon the death of the chief, power passed into the hands of his cousin (ὁ ἐξάδελφος) or son of his cousin (ὁ παῖς ἐξαδέλφου). Thanks to a similar procedure, the learned emperor claimed, the position of leader was not held by just one branch of the clan, but also by collateral branches; however, power could never be fall into the hands of a stranger tribe.[85] This system of inheritance was not only characteristic of the Pechenegs. Some similarities can be observed

81 Tryjarski 1975a, 575.

82 Tryjarski 1975a, 575.

83 Tryjarski 1975a, 575. It is known that in their dealings with the imperial court, the Huns were helped by Romans from the provinces they had conquered. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 106–107.

84 DAI, XXXVII 15–16, 32–33 (p. 166/167).

85 DAI, XXXVII 24–32 (p. 166/167).

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with the 'lateral sucession' system (*udel'no-lestvichnaia sistema*), which existed among the Blue Turks. It stipulated that supreme power over the whole empire would be inherited not by the leader's son, but by his younger brother, and by the oldest fraternal nephew from his younger paternal uncle. While waiting for the throne, 'princes of the blood', i.e., members of the royal Ashina clan, were to manage districts assigned to them. According to Lev Gumilev, this system was introduced in the 6th century when the great Turkic Khaganate was created. Its prototype was a system of inheritance known from the second century in southern Xiongnu.[86] It was introduced namely to prevent fratricidal fights between individual princes of the blood. This system both provided members of the Ashina clan with an appropriate standard of living, and gave them hope for the assumption of supreme power. While there are obvious differences between the Turks and Pechenegs, the system observed in the latter most likely played a similar role. In spite of its clear process for closing off tribal power, this type of succession guaranteed that the political primacy of one branch of the clan would be limited, while at the same time creating opportunities for another branch of the clan to assume leadership.

Another problem is the question of the nature of the power of tribal leaders. During their life-long authority over a *genea* did they have to take into account the opinions of other members of the community, perhaps gathered in elementary political institutions? It seems that the answer to this question is affirmative. Despite the issues outlined above, which allow us to see signs of social differentiation, the Pechenegs appear to have been quite an egalitarian community, in which the largest part of the population possessed an average material status and a similar level of prestige. This would have meant that any decision concerning the whole community would require the consent of all its free members. A similar state of affairs was the *raison d'être* for institutions like the public gathering. However, within such an institution or alongside it,

86 Gumilev 1966, 213–214; 1993, 56–59; Kychanov 2010, 127–129. In fact, in the Xiongnu empire after the First Civil War (60 BCE), direct-line (father to son) and lateral (elder to younger brother) systems of inheritance were used interchangeably. Barfield 1992, 71–77 (on succession in Xiongnu), 133–138 (on succession in Turks). The latter seems to have treated the mechanism of succession as the outcome of purely political factors and the principles of inheritance known to steppe people. Khazanov 1975, 195–199 (in the case of the Scythians the author assumes the dominance of the principle of succession 'from father to son', in the case of Xiongnu he takes a position similar to T.J. Barfield). Finally, there is no shortage of researchers who question the existence of any principle of succession in the Ashina Turks, except for their limiting the group of potential successors to the charismatic Ashina clan. The final recipient of the throne was determined by the political and military power of a particular candidate. Cf. Fletcher 1979, 238–239; He Xingliang, Guo Hongzhen 2008, 78–79; Skaff 2012, 78.

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there may have been a place for prominent members of a given *genea*, i.e., those with greater social capital, to have a voice. The information provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus leaves no doubt that in the mid-10th century there was a group of families that had reserved for themselves power over individual units of Pecheneg ethnos. The existence of such a *quasi* aristocracy is also confirmed by later accounts. They must have had more of a voice within individual *geneai* than average members. However, it is difficult to say whether this advantage assumed an institutionalized form, such as a council comprised of 'more worthy' Pechenegs. If such a council did in fact exist, it probably also included candidates for future chiefs of a given *genea*, as well as chiefs of smaller units. Such an institution, or perhaps simply an influential pressure group, could realistically co-rule, limiting the role of the current head of a given *genea* to the role of *primus inter pares*.[87]

It seems that the existence of both types of collegial institutions is confirmed by written sources. Bruno of Querfurt, who entered the lands of the Pechenegs in the spring of 1008 with the intention of preaching the Gospel, came across some of their 'larger people' (*maior populus*) and had to wait a week before they could gather to pass judgement on the missionary.[88] The fact that members of the community, notified by messengers, arrived at the gathering (*concilum*) in a relatively short period of time, gives rise to the assumption that this was not the whole ethnos of the Pechenegs, but rather one of its larger units. The functioning of a congregation comprised of warriors is confirmed by the account of John Skylitzes. A Pecheneg force (15,000 riders and four chiefs) sent against the Seljuks by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos in the spring of 1049 were to hold a meeting near Bithynia, during which a decision was made about whether to begin a rebellion against Byzantium. The word (τὸ κομέντον) used by the Byzantine chronicler to describe the Pechenegs' gathering probably did not come from their language, but was a Greek form of the Latin word *conventus*.[89] Anna Komnena describes the following incident. During fighting with Byzantium there was a dispute among the Pechenegs over what to do with prisoners-of-war. The chiefs wanted to kill them, but this was opposed by a number of warriors, who hoped to obtain a ransom for them.

87 Moszyński 1996, 53; Pletneva 1958, 192–193; Tryjarski 1975a, 573. The last two researchers believe that before the mechanism of succession among the Pechenegs came to assume an automatic formula, new chiefs may have been elected by the members of a given *genea*.

88 Bruno, 99. Cf. Pletneva 1958, 192; Tryjarski 1975a, 573. For a dating of Bruno's mission: Paroń 2013, 116 (n. 68).

89 Io.Scyl., 460; Wortley 2010, 430–431. Cf. Moravcsik 1951, 225–233; Pritsak 1975, 220.

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In the face of the opposition of their subordinates, the commanders abandoned their plans.[90]

The 'public gathering' could have provided an important counter-balance to the opinions of more influential individuals. In St. Bruno's letter we learn that his fate would have been a foregone conclusion if the decision of the more important members of the community (*maiores terrae*) had not changed the unequivocally hostile position of the people.[91] It is significant that the missionary does not mention any Pecheneg chiefs, heads or princes. In the light of his account, the steppe people seem to have been guided by a collegial structure in which none of them stood above the others. The lack of clear leadership may have been due to its limited authority, which would confirm the thesis that the heads of the *geneai*, about whom Constantine VII wrote, as members of the elite were in fact 'first among equals'.

An issue not yet addressed in this study is the question of the existence of central institutions among the Pechenegs, i.e., those that incorporated the ethnos as a whole. This problem is especially important for understanding the ability of steppe people to act together before external political powers. The information contained in *De administrando imperio* seems to indicate that among the Pechenegs there was a 'hierarchy of tribes', also observed in other nomadic ethne. Its residual form is confirmed by the final passage of Chapter 37:

> Ἰστέον, ὅτι καὶ Κάγγαρ ὀνομάζονται οἱ Πατζινακῖται, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάντες, πλὴν ὁ τῶν τριῶν θεμάτων λαός, τοῦ Ἰαβδιηρτὶ καὶ τοῦ Κουαρτζιτζοὺρ καὶ τοῦ Χαβουξιγγυλά, ὡς ἀνδρειότεροι καὶ εὐγενέστεροι τῶν λοιπῶν· τοῦτο γὰρ δηλοῖ ἡ τοῦ Κάγγαρ προσηγορία.[92]
>
> The Pechenegs are also called 'Kangar', though not all of them, but only the folk [λαὸς] of the three provinces of Iabdierti and Kouartzitzour and Chabouxingyla, for they are more valiant and noble than the rest: and that is what the title 'Kangar' signifies.

The above description seems to indicate that three *geneai* of Pechenegs enjoyed greater prestige than the others. On the basis of other information from *De administrando imperio* it can be concluded that the *Kangar* was the oldest part of the Pecheneg political organism, around which the remaining tribes were

90 An.Kom., VII 4.4 (p. 216).
91 Bruno, 100.
92 DAI, XXXVII 68–71 (p. 170/171).

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united.[93] Constantine VII clearly states that earlier, i.e., in the times of their first clashes with Magyars, all Pechenegs called themselves *Kangar*. This kind of story – assuming that it is not just a legend – seems to suggest that the three tribes mentioned could have enjoyed some real, and not just honorary political primacy. However, it is very difficult to determine how this manifested itself. In *De administrando imperio* we find no additional information, but we do find some in another work attributed to Emperor Constantine VII. In *De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*, a number of political subjects (states and peoples) are mentioned with whom Byzantium maintained diplomatic contacts. The author of the work also described the nature of these relations. Letters (τὰ γράμματα) with a golden seal of the appropriate value were sent to independent rulers, while orders (αἱ κελεύσεις) were sent to political subordinates of the empire. The heads of the Pechenegs (the author uses the plural form) were to receive letters bearing a two-solidi gold seal.[94] The steppe dwellers were therefore recognized by Constantinople as an independent people, headed by several, probably eight, tribal chiefs. Worthy of note is the Emperor's lack of knowledge about any central institutions of power. The importance of the Pechenegs to Constantine VII's political plans would seem to exclude the possibility of his being ignorant about such a matter. This would mean that there was no unified power leader among the Pechenegs in the mid-10th century.

There are, however, relations that seem to contradict this last statement. In Chapter 17 of al-Masʿūdī's *Golden Meadows* we read that each of the four peoples (including the Pechenegs) who attacked the Byzantine fortress Walandar (*W.l.nd.r.*) had a king. What is more, before the battle the ruler of the Pechenegs requested he be given supreme command and was granted it.[95] Moreover, the anonymous Persian geography *The Regions of the World* (*Hudūd al-ʾĀlam*) reads:

> The [Pechenegs] have no towns; their chief (*mihtar*) is one of themselves.[96]

Finally, we learn from John Skylitzes, in his account of the conflict between Kegenes and Tyrach, that the latter came from a noble family and was the leader (ἀρχηγός) of the entire Pecheneg people. His adversary, on the other

93 DAI, XXXVII 68–71; XXXVIII 19–21, 24–26 (p. 170/171).

94 DCP, II 48 (p. 691, v. 5–7): εἰς τοὺς ἄρχοντας τῶν Πατζινακίτων. βούλλα χρυσῆ δισολδία. γράμματα Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Ῥωμανοῦ τῶν φιλοχρίστων βασιλέων Ῥωμαίων πρὸς τοὺς ἄρχοντας τῶν Πατζινακίτων. Cf. Moffatt, Tall 2012, 691; Stephenson 2000, 35–36.

95 al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 58, 62; Pellat 1962, 177, 178.

96 Hudūd al-ʿĀlam: Minorsky 1937, 101; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 208.

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hand, was said to come from the lower classes.[97] The chronicler clearly states that in the mid-11th century there was at least an ad-hoc form of unified leadership over the whole ethnos.

Is it possible to reconcile these quite unambiguous sounding accounts with the silence of Constantine VII? Perhaps a partial explanation is provided by the space in time that separates the individual accounts, or more precisely *De administrando imperio* and Skylitzes' chronicle. We have already stated that the more than 100 years that elapsed between the writing of both works was sufficient time to bring about changes in the Pechenegs' political system. However, there are two more accounts, both of which are much closer, almost contemporary, to *De administrando imperio*. The first is Masʿūdī's work, which dates back to the 940s.[98] In his description of events that took place around the year 934, Masʿūdī mentions the 'king of the Pechenegs'.[99] The second work, *The Regions of the World*, was written in the early 980s. However, it is more difficult to determine to which period in the Pechenegs' history to date the facts presented in the Persian geography. If we consider it part of the Jayhānī tradition, we would date this reference work to the 9th century, which is what Vladimir Minorsky has done.[100] The relevant passage, however, does not find a counterpart in other sources, drawing on a lost work written by a Samanid dignitary, which suggests that the account refers to a later period in the history of the Pechenegs. Such an interpretation is more probable due to the fact that a unified leadership is attributed to the so-called Turkish Pechenegs. The anonymous geographer could have understood by this name some part of the ethnos which at the end of the 9th century had not left the Caspian steppe and was thus cut off from the main mass of the people and most probably subordinated to the Uzes.[101] The *mihtar* mentioned by the author of *Hudūd al-ʾĀlam* would therefore have been the leader of a small group that remained outside the Pechenegs' sociopolitical organization.

It is more difficult to reconcile the data from *Golden Meadows* with the information provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. It is possible to resolve this discrepancy between sources in part by taking into account the circumstances in which the 'king' mentioned by Masudi appears. He stood at the head of a war expedition, which leads us to accept the hypothesis that in the event of the need for a joint armed action, power over the entire Pecheneg ethnos

97 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 39–43); Wortley 2010, 427.

98 Swoboda 1990a, 228; Lewicka-Rajewska 2004, 45.

99 Marquart 1903, 64. Cf. also Chapter 5 of the present book.

100 Minorsky 1937, 314. Similarly Zimonyi, Göckenjan 2010, 208 (n. 144).

101 DAI, XXXVII 50–57 (pp. 168–169). Ahmad ibn Fadlan mentions the existence of such a group, which possibly lived near Shalkar Lake. Cf. footnote 53 in the previous chapter.

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could be granted to one of its prominent members for a strictly defined period of time, with the consent of all the tribes. This unified command gave them a better chance of conducting their military operation efficiently, but once the fighting was over, the power of the chief commander expired. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus does not mention this because the description of sociopolitical relations contained in the Chapter 37 of his work concerned a period of peace.

In the mid-10th century there were thus three tribes (*geneai*) among the Pechenegs which enjoyed considerable prestige, and which could have led to their effective possession of political primacy. If Pletneva's hypothesis is true, and the *Kangar* brought the other five clans together by means of conquest,[102] then the credibility of the previous hypothesis increases significantly. Unfortunately, written sources do not provide us with such certainty. There are a number of doubts about the emergence of a unified political authority among the Pechenegs. However, we can assume that one did not exist when they arrived to the Black Sea steppe. When there was a need for joint military action, the chief command was probably entrusted to one of the chiefs. Given the fact that the *Kangar* tribes maintained their political domination, we can assume that the chief commander might have come from among them. His power was limited in that it concerned only military matters and expired at the end of combat. During times of peace, the leadership of the various tribes was in the hands of the chiefs (μεγάλοι ἄρχοντες), which seems to be confirmed by information found in *De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*. The upsetting of the sociopolitical organization of the Pechenegs at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries and the constant threat posed by the Uzes, which required the engagement of the entire ethnos, could have opened up a path to the establishment of a monarchy. This seems to be indicated by the case of Tyrach, who gained power over all of ethnos before the mid-11th century. The metamorphosis of this political system probably took place shortly before Skylitzes' account was written. This seems to be evidenced by the clear limitations placed on Tyrach's power in favour of the lesser chiefs around him. It is possible that he held the position among them of *primus inter pares*.[103] We do not know into what spheres his authority extended. One can assume that they were probably military in nature, considering that his power most

102 Pletneva 1958, 162–163.

103 Skylitzes writes that after the formal recognition of the sovereignty of Constantine IX Monomachos, Tyrach and his 140 chiefs were brought to Constantinople. The fact that the whole group was baptized and received with the greatest honours additionally proves its members' aristocratic origin. This seems to prove the persistence of social structures and institutions limiting Tyrach's powers. Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 83–85); Wortley 2010, 430.

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likely grew out of his temporarily being entrusted with the function of chief commander. He probably also had to represent his entire people in talks with external political partners. This is evidenced by the fact that Tyrach sent a message to Constantinople with a demand to limit Kegenes' attacks on his former compatriots.[104] However, it should be stressed once again that his position was not so strong that he was able to take decisions independently in regard to his policies, be they external or internal.

There remains the question of how to name the formula for political life adopted by the Pechenegs. This requires the use of terminology that poses a number of problems, including those outlined above. Nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid defining the shape of the Pechenegs' system of political organization because it largely determined the shape of their relations with the outside world. The aim of the following discussion will therefore be to determine whether they developed a model of political organization that allowed them to effectively defend their interests in their contacts with neighbouring political powers. This question is closely related to that of the origins of the state among steppe peoples. In the case of nomadic societies, a number of factors favouring its creation have already been pointed out. Academics basing their investigations on a Marxist paradigm have focused mainly on internal changes affecting the social and economic sphere. Inequalities in terms of wealth, as in the case of other societies, led to the emergence of a class society, which the state had to choose as the framework for its existence.[105] A scheme of this kind cannot be maintained in pure form. This seems to have been proven by findings which show that permanent social divisions are often secondary to the creation of the state.[106] Moreover, the schematism of orthodox Marxist approaches, which fail to take into account the specificity of steppe communities, is striking. Today a direction in academic reflection seems to dominate whose most eminent representatives are inclined to seek the main impulse for state formation outside the nomadic communities themselves. Contacts with the outside world created the conditions and the need for the creation of a state.[107] It was not just external threats or the expansion of neighbour-

104 Io.Scyl., 457 (v. 20–27); Wortley 2010, 428.

105 Vladimirtsov 1934; Grekov, Iakubovskii 1950; Pletneva 1967; 1982; Fedorov-Davydov 1973; Kyčanov 2010. A different position is taken by G.E. Markov (1976, 312–313), who both effectively criticizes the scheme of orthodox Marxist approaches, and considers that steppe people were unable to create a state, because they were unable to create a permanently hierarchical society. Cf. also N.N. Kradin's remarks: 2003, 169–170, 172.

106 Tymowski 1992, 270; Khazanov 1984, 177–178.

107 There is an entire group of researchers inspired mainly by the studies of the American orientalist Owen Lattimore. (1988 [first published in 1940]). Khazanov 1984, 228–233; Barfield 1992; 1993; Di Cosmo 1999; 6–9; Kradin 2003, 171–172.

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ing steppe people that created the necessity to place power into the hands of a single person or small group of individuals. Problems of this kind did not have to lead to the emergence of a permanent centre of power. There have been many cases when after an external threat was neutralized or an armed conflict ended, the system of social relations returned to its initial state.[108] Some researchers attach much greater importance to the regular contacts nomads had with settled communities. These relations led steppe people to assimilate their models of political organization; moreover, whether through conquest or payment of tribute, they could obtain the means to maintain state structures.[109] The majority of organisms of this type were, as mentioned above, highly unstable in character. However, this does not change the fact that they were the best tools for nomads to define their relations with the outside world under the most favourable conditions possible for them.

The political organization of the Pechenegs has been described in a number of very different ways. Eugeniusz Kucharski and Marian Lewicki believe that the Pechenegs 'created [....] a perfectly organized and threatening steppe state'. According to these authors, this state was union (Pol. *rzesza*) in character, i.e., a militarily organized state consisting of various ethnic elements of both Turkic and non-Turkic origin.[110] This last claim is confirmed by archaeological data.[111] Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw upon the findings of these Polish researchers for support, as they were presented without any arguments to support them. The existence of a more developed form of political existence, perhaps a state, seems to be acceptable to Josef Németh in the case of the Pechenegs. A Hungarian scholar, made a linguistic analysis of the eight names of tribes mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. His results, accepted by the majority of researchers, boil down to his finding that each of the tribe names contains two elements: an equine coat colour term and a honorific title. According to the Németh, these titles and offices were inherited by the leaders of particular tribes, while their names originally designated administrative units.[112] Despite its unquestionable scientific value, it is very difficult to interpret the results of the linguistic analysis presented above. It is not exactly clear to what period in

108 However, a long-term external threat may force political centralization, which, if maintained over a long period of time, will lead to lasting changes of a state-forming nature. Cf. Di Cosmo 1999, 9–18; 2002, 178–190; Steuer 2006, 227–236 (based on other source material, he points to the mechanism of militarization, which can lead to the creation of new tribal or state structures).

109 Khazanov 1984, 230–233.

110 Kucharski, Lewicki, 1934, 44.

111 Pletneva 1958, 162.

112 Németh 1922, 219–225; 1930, 27–32. Cf. Marquart 1929, 84–85; Menges 1944–45, 260–269; Vörös 2002, 623–627.

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the history of the Pechenegs it should be applied, the mid-10th century, which seems doubtful, or an earlier period. It is also puzzling that none of the above tribe names is found in the later history of the Pechenegs. According to Pritsak, the political structure of Pechenegs can be described as a double kingdom.[113] As in many other nomadic groups in the Middle Ages, power was allegedly held by two khagans.[114] The existence of such an institution is confirmed by a very late mention contained in the works of two Arab geographers: Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (13th century) and Abu al-Fida (14th century).[115] However, the statements of both authors arouse suspicion,[116] especially if we compare them with the information of a writer from the 10th century, i.e., a contemporary of the Pechenegs: Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

Edward Tryjarski has expressed scepticism about claims the Pechenegs created their own state. Tryjarski draws attention to a lack of 'tribal solidarity' among the Pechenegs, expressed through frequent fratricidal conflicts and a tendency to enter into the service of foreign rulers. He also seems correct in his observation that the Pechenegs lacked a strong leader who could have consolidated power over the entire ethnos and directed its future path. Both of these factors led to political weakness in the Pechenegs and to their ultimate defeat.[117] Pletneva also assessed the coherence of the Pechenegs' political organism very negatively. She stated that the four western and four eastern *geneai* mentioned by Constantine VII were not one, but two completely independent tribal unions. Unfortunately, she does not provide any justification for her hypothesis.[118] Victor Spinei has recently expressed a very similar view. He particularly emphasized the lack of intercommunity cohesion among Pechenegs.[119]

113 Pritsak 1975, 221.

114 The existence of a double khaganate has allegedly been confirmed for the Blue Turks, Avars, Khazars and Hungarians: Pritsak 1988, 754; Györffy 1994, 87–104. The problem is that in most of these cases (especially the Avars and Khazars) we are dealing not so much with a double khaganate, as with an evolution of the political system which led to reducing the real power of monarchs and limiting their role to the sacral and symbolic spheres. Political affairs began to be conducted on behalf of the ruler by a high-ranking dignitary. Similar mechanisms seem to have existed in all civilizations (cf. Merovingian kingdoms, Abbasid Caliphate) and can hardly be seen as evidence of a double monarchical system. Cf. also Pohl 1988, 293–300; Avenarius 1988, 147–150.

115 Ibn Sa'id al-Magribi: Konovalova 2009, 34; Abu-l-Fida, II, 293; Konovalova 2009, 118.

116 P.B. Golden considers the above information to represent a topos: 1990, 273; 1992, 267. Cf. Konovalova 2009, 73 (n. 3).

117 Tryjarski 1975a, 568–569.

118 Pletneva 1958, 192.

119 Spinei 2003, 106–107.

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While acknowledging the arguments of these three researchers on many issues, it should be noted that they underestimated the 'tribal solidarity' of the Pechenegs. This problem will be discussed in more detail in the fourth part of this chapter.[120] The transition to acting in the service of foreign countries intensified markedly in the late period of the Pechenegs' history, after their political significance had significantly decreased.[121] Moreover, this usually concerned small groups or even individuals, so it is difficult to consider it a measure of the degree of coherence in the Pechenegs' internal ethnos throughout their history. In terms of internal contradictions, it is difficult to deny that they existed among the Pechenegs. The conflict between Kegenes and Tyrach is the best testimony to their existence.[122] However, they were ambivalent in character. On the one hand, they splintered the unity of ethnos; on the other, in the case of Kegenes and his victory, they could have led to the emergence of a strong centralized authority among the Pechenegs.[123] Moreover, it is worth noting that internal struggles were an extremely frequent phenomenon and affected communities that had already managed to create their own states. The history of the Ashina Turks or Chingisids best illustrates this statement. It is therefore not so much a problem of determining whether armed conflicts took place within a given nomadic community, but rather of examining whether this led to the creation of mechanisms or institutions that would limit factors conducive to the outbreak of fighting. The Pechenegs seem to have had two institutions that fulfilled such tasks. The first was a territorial division corresponding to the division of the ethnos into tribes (*geneai*) and 'clans'. The second was the system of succession within tribes, which was most likely conceived of as a limiting factor in power struggles the ruling family. We have already mentioned that the tribe was a less coherent unit within nomadic social organizations, and therefore probably did not stand up well to internal shocks, and thus, preventing them through the creation of a system of inheritance was a necessity that benefited the Pechenegs. However, we should share the doubts of Tryjarski and Pletneva on the question of the existence of a unified political authority who had power over the whole ethnos. As we have noted, even if one came into being, it was in an embryonic form and came in the last years of the independent existence of this ethnos.

120 Cf. excellent information from Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus: DAI, XXXVII 50–57 (p. 168/169).

121 All the examples cited by V. Spinei come from this period.

122 Io.Scyl., 455–457; Wortley 2010, 426–428.

123 Cf. Chapters 4.4 and 7 of the present book.

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Anatoly M. Khazanov also spoke briefly about the political organization of the Pechenegs. In his inquiries, Khazanov relied solely only on the data of Constantine VII. On this basis, he decided that they formed a segmentary structure consisting of eight chiefdoms.[124] This interpretation, as can be deduced from the terms used by Khazanov, assumes the equal status of individual units (chiefdoms), who could act together against a common enemy; at the same time, they balanced their influence, preventing one of them from gaining dominance. One of the most recent attempts to define the political organization of the Pechenegs was made by Aleksei V. Marey.[125] He stated that it possessed all the features of a so-called nomadic empire, but he ultimately considers it to be a complex chiefdom, which could have become a chiefdom proper if a charismatic leader appeared. In addition to their insufficient grounding in source materials, Marey's observations raise doubts because the political organization of the Pechenegs seems not to have met one fundamental condition that would allow it to be considered a nomadic empire. This is the lack of a strong political centre. Marey also does not define the terms used in his analysis. We can only assume that a complex chiefdom can be distinguished from an ordinary chiefdom by the lack of a unified power structure. If so, then Marey's reconstructed model of the Pechenegs' political structure would be identical to the segmentary model.

Therefore, how can we characterize the form of political life that existed among the Pechenegs? Lev Gumilev believed that steppe people adopted two models for the organization of their societies: that of a state (*el*) and of a confederation of tribes. The latter is characterized by a lack of central power; its place is occupied by a single tribe, which enjoys a certain honorary primacy, but does not rule. Each tribe is headed by a chief with a considerable level of autonomy. Members of similar federations were united by a mutual desire to defend their independence and therefore banded together only when it was threatened.[126] The description of the system offered by Gumilev is extremely general, merely a rough sketch; nevertheless, in spite of such reservations, it possesses a certain analytical value. As mentioned above, the Eurasian steppe peoples were able to create political organisms such as early states, which rarely took the form of mature states. The term 'confederation of tribes' raises legitimate objections, as it suggests a voluntary association of the constituent units. Meanwhile, the

124 Khazanov 1984, 178–179.

125 Marey 2011, 450–456.

126 Gumilev 1993, 13; 1997, 78. The scholar attributes the confederation model to the T'ie-lê (4th–5th century AD) and the Uyghurs (7th–8th century AD). Both examples, especially the latter, are very controversial.

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use of force in the process of creating such political structures was at least as frequent as peaceful means.[127] Nevertheless, the similarity between the political organism of the Pechenegs and the confederation model seems quite obvious. This is due in particular to the lack of a clearly defined centre of power, or rather, the existence of one that was merely ad-hoc and temporary in nature. The main units of this political organism were chiefdoms, despite the domination of the *Kangar*, who together formed a segmentary structure.[128] In spite of the Pechenegs' turbulent history, it was apparently never violated. We can only observe quantitative changes, e.g., the number of main units comprising the ethnos. Its segmental power structure was also in line with the relative egalitarianism of the Pechenegs. There were undoubtedly more influential and richer groups with a *quasi*-aristocratic status among them, but they never became completely independent of the will of the majority, the role of which, even during military campaigns, cannot be underestimated.[129] The egalitarianism of the Pechenegs also seems to be emphasized by material traces of funeral rituals, which do not confirm a strong tendency to manifest prestige among the richer or more influential members of the ethnos.

The persistence of such a segmental structure also shaped the relations of the Pechenegs with the outside world. The lack of a strong ruler able to define the interests of the entire ethnos and implement them in their external relations led the Pechenegs to conduct such affairs in a rather instinctive manner, limiting themselves for the most part to reacting to direct threats. Given this situation, one cannot even really speak about their having a defined political strategy, as their actions were based more on political reflexes. In theory, these circumstances should have been favourable to their better organized neighbouring political entities, in particular Byzantium and Rus', whose diplomats could more easily induce the steppe people to pursue interests that benefited these states. However, such a conclusion seems premature. The fact that relations with a divided political organism lacking a distinct political centre were not at all easy requires we exercise caution. On the other hand, the segmented

127 Khazanov 1984, 152.

128 The organization of the Pechenegs is quite reminiscent of the segmental union of chieftains, for which Aidan Southal proposed the term 'segmentary state'. A structure of this type had already developed the three levels of governance typical of a state, though the highest of the three exists only on occasion. Such a state of affairs, however, does not allow for full centralization of power and its independence from lower levels of management, which seems to make it difficult to call this type of political organization a state. Southal 1988, 52–82. Cf. Tymowski 2012, 774–775.

129 Pletneva (1958, 193) calls the social and political system of the Pechenegs a military democracy. A similar term is also used by Pritsak (1975, 220), who notes that he does not use it in the Marxist sense.

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nature of the Pechenegs' system resulted in an almost complete lack of desire for political expansion aimed at subjugating any of the neighbouring peoples or states. Having conquered huge stretches of the steppe from the Danube to the Don at the end of the 9th century, the Pechenegs never tried to enlarge their territory further. Perhaps their further expansion was limited by geographical factors (the Carpathian arch in the west, the Black Sea in the south), but they never tried to expand their borders at the expense of the Khazar Khaganate or Rus'. Such projects in the early 10th century, after all, might have brought positive results. Similarly, after crossing the borders of Byzantium in the mid-11th century, the Pechenegs guarded their separateness, but did not attempt, like the Bulgars, to create a strong state organism. Even clearer conclusions can be drawn from a comparison with the Huns, the Ashina Turks and the Mongols, whose history at certain times is one of constant and unrestrained conquest. Such a comparison best demonstrates the differences resulting from the fact that these other ethne created strong states based on a highly efficient military organization. Meanwhile, the aggression of the Pechenegs very often arose from non-political motives, which we will attempt to show in subsequent chapters of this work.

4.3 Economy

The economy of nomadic peoples is based on extensive pastoralism, usually in the form of open-range or free grazing, in which herds remain in open spaces year round, rather than being driven into enclosures, with the animals moving from place to place within a specific territory. They are accompanied by a large majority of the population, for which pastoral activity is their source of livelihood. Animal production is generally geared towards meeting the basic needs of the community rather than profit, which is fundamentally different from modern animal husbandry in a market economy. This does not mean, of course, that a population engaged in extensive pastoralism did not obtain surpluses that could become an item of trade. Experts in the subject distinguish several types of pastoralism, two of which can be attributed to nomadic peoples: nomadism proper and semi-nomadic pastoralism. These differ in terms of whether or not agriculture functions as a complementary form of economic activity. In the first, less common case, agriculture is not practiced at all.[130]

The Pechenegs most likely practiced semi-nomadic pastoralism. The areas in which they lived, as we could see in Chapter 1, were definitely conducive to

130 Khazanov 1984, 15–22.

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this form of economic activity. This particularly concerns the Black Sea steppe, whose vast stretches of land were covered with tall grasses, perfectly suited for animal feed.[131] The only significant impediment posed by the steppe was its harsh winters, which covered the steppe floor with a thick layer of snow, from which sparse clumps of grass protruded. However, the conditions during winter did not always pose a significant threat to livestock, which were able to extract food from under the snow. A real threat, however, was posed by glazed frost, which often appeared at the turn of late winter and early spring, when ice covering the snow prevented the animals from getting food, which in turn led to significant losses in the herd. This danger could only be avoided by moving to a less snowy area or one free of ice cover.[132] In summer, droughts on the steppe were a major problem, but during this time animals were driven to the forest-steppe zone, where conditions were more tolerable.

Most scholars say that in a developed nomadic economy, herds generally consist of horses, sheep, goats, large horned cattle, and camels.[133] Specialization in the breeding of one species is an extremely rare phenomenon. A specific feature of the Eurasian steppe is the existence of herds comprised of different animals,[134] with sheep and horses dominating.[135] The raising of horses was a characteristic feature of the Eurasian steppe, where these animals served not only as a means of transport, but also as a source of milk and meat. The importance of sheep to the nomadic economy is most clearly demonstrated by an Uzbek saying that these animals came to earth straight from heaven.[136] Both sheep and horses were perfectly adapted to live in the difficult conditions of the steppe. They were able to feed themselves even in the most difficult circumstances. According to modern-day scholars, a steppe horse is able to dig up grass from underneath snow cover up to a depth of 40 cm, and in extreme cases, even 50 cm, while a sheep can find grass in up to 15 cm, or even 17 cm, of snow.[137] Herodotus, Pseudo-Hippocrates, and Strabo all wrote about this. Recent data seems to confirm the information provided by Ahmad ibn Fadlan, who wrote: 'The sheep graze mostly on what lies underneath the snow, digging

131 Pletneva 1958, 186.

132 Pletneva 1958, 187. Cf. Gumilow 1997, 12–13; Kałużyński 1970, 30.

133 Moszyński 1996, 18; Pletneva 1958, 187; Jagchid, Hayer 1983, 22; Kałużyński 1983, 59.

134 Khazanov 1984, 46.

135 Khazanov 1984, 46–47.

136 Khazanov 1984, 46.

137 Khazanov 1984, 46, 50. Sechin Jagchid and Peter Hayer (1983, 21–22) are of a slightly different opinion as far as the sheep's abilities is concerned. According to both researchers, these animals, like cows, require feeding by humans during winter; otherwise they are likely to starve to death.

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for the grass with their hooves.' He then adds: 'If they do not find grass, they eat snow instead and grow inordinately fat.'[138]

Less frequently among the herds of animals bred by nomads were large horned cattle. Although steppe peoples appreciated their qualities, the high feed requirements and the fact that they did not tolerate a nomadic lifestyle well meant that they constituted a small percentage of the nomads' livestock. Experts on the subject claim that an increase in the number of large cattle indicated that the nomadic community raising them was undergoing a process of sedentarization. Yet we have confirmation of the presence of these livestock animals on the Black Sea steppe already in antiquity from the writings of Herodotus, Pseudo-Hippocrates, Strabo, and elsewhere.[139]

In Eurasian areas, goats usually grazed in desert or semi-desert areas. They were not very highly valued, and were most commonly reared by poorer people.[140] The question of the presence of camels on the steppe is somewhat more complicated. The natural conditions there, especially during the harsh winters, made it very difficult for camels to survive. Among the early Eurasian nomads, camels were rather rare. It is usually assumed that an increasing prevalence of this animal most likely occurred during the Mongolian period.[141] However, data from chronicles seems to contradict this. In accounts about Russian expeditions against the Cumans, we find information that camels belonging to the steppe-dwellers were taken as booty by the princes.[142]

In the case of the Pechenegs, the accounts of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and Muslim writers testify to the breeding of horses, horned cattle, and sheep.[143] We can suppose that the population of these animals was quite numerous because they were objects of trade.[144] The lack of source data leads us to assume that the Pechenegs bred goats but on a small scale or not at all. The possible presence of camels in their herds is also questionable. Pletneva states, however, that their presence on the Black Sea steppe is confirmed by a fresco uncovered in Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev. It depicts a bactrian camel, a species which was bred in Inner Asia. According to Pletneva, the inspiration

138 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 212–215; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 33; Kovalevskii 1956, 130; Frye 2005, 42.

139 Cf. Chapter 1 of the present book.

140 Jagchid, Hayer 1983, 22; Khazanov 1984, 47.

141 Spuler 1967, 253, 361, 373, 410, 423; Khazanov 1984, 48.

142 PVL 1, AM 6603 (1095), col. 228; AM 6611 (1103), col. 279; PNL, AM 6660 (1152), p. 196. Cf. Noonan 1992, 311.

143 DAI II 6–8, (p. 50/51). Gardīzī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 165; Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 222; Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 32–33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 250. Zakhoder 1967, 74.

144 DAI, II 6–8, (p. 50/51).

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for the artist's image came from the southern neighbours of the Rus'. Was this the Pechenegs?[145] The only mention in written sources about their possible use of camels comes from *The Life of Lietbertus, Bishop of Cambrai*.[146] On his way to the Holy Land in ca. 1054 he travelled through the Balkans, where he and his companions were attacked by 'Scythian robbers (*latrunculi Sciticae gentis*)', who are said to have ridden horses and camels (*sessores equorum camelorumque*).[147] The characteristics of the attackers supplied by the author leaves no doubt that they were nomads, which has prompted researchers to identify these 'Scythian robbers' as Pechenegs.[148] This hagiographical source would therefore contain testimony of camel breeding by these nomads. The credibility of this account, however, is limited. It is worth noting that *The Life of Lietbertus* was written ca. 1099–1100, i.e., almost half a century after the saint's pilgrimage. Its author, Raoul (Rodulphus), a monk of the Abbey of the Holy Sepulchre of Cambrai, may have accompanied Lietbertus on his journey, but his message is quite jumbled and plagued with numerous errors.[149] The characteristics of the attackers, in particular, arouses the researcher's doubts. Raoul initially describes them as coming from a Scythian tribe, then assigns to them the practice of circumcision, found among the Saracens, and finally, several lines below, simply refers to them as Saracens. Similar reasoning gives rise to suspicions that in his description of the nomadic bandits, the monk simply combined the characteristics of several nomadic peoples with whom he came into contact during his pilgrimage to the Middle East. This suspicion is further substantiated by the fact that the nomads of the Great Steppe rarely used camels as mounts, while in the biographer's account, they are mentioned alongside horses. We therefore cannot use *The Life of Lietbertus* as a basis for concluding that the Pechenegs bred camels.

The same applies to archaeological sources. The remains of camel bones have been discovered at sites located within or nearby territories that could have been controlled by the Pechenegs. A number of such finds come from cemeteries and settlements located on the Don, the upper Severskii Donets, the middle Oskol and in Dinogetia (near today's village of Garvăn) on the lower Danube.[150] These discoveries have been interpreted as evidence of

145 Pletneva 1958, 187–188.

146 V.Liet., 838–866.

147 V.Liet., XXXIII–XXXIV (pp. 854–855).

148 Uzelac 2010, 65–67.

149 The author has very little knowledge of the geography of south-eastern Europe and the Middle East: he confuses Corinth with Thessaloniki and places Isauria in the Balkans, somewhere between Dalmatia and Corinth. V.Liet., XXXV (p. 855).

150 Kovalev 2005, 81, 86 (map no. 2), 88–89, 99; Haimovici 1984, 311–319.

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the functioning of trade routes; meanwhile, the Pechenegs were involved in trade, especially in the first two-thirds of the 10th century. Long-distance trade required the replacement of animals during the journey. This mechanism is described by Ahmad ibn Fadlan.[151] The Pechenegs, who were involved in this trade, could therefore have provided merchants travelling across their lands with necessary means of transport, including camels. Yet, the data from written sources is insufficient to dispel any doubts. Al-Gardīzī states that while travelling through the lands of the Pechenegs it was necessary to purchase riding animals, but he only mentions horses.[152]

We can say a bit more about the types of horses used thanks to archaeological evidence. Data from the vicinity of the Sarkel confirms the presence of two breeds of horses among the steppe peoples. The first of these, with a large head and strong, massive limbs, was typical of steppe horses. The second one was characterized by a much smaller head, narrow nostrils and long, thin legs. This breed occurred much less frequently on the steppe and was probably used as a mount by the nomadic aristocracy.[153]

The nomads' horned cattle were said to be extremely hardy and able to survive even in the harshest conditions, although they were not a particularly productive species.[154] However, in light of the above considerations, it must be concluded that they were probably not very numerous and therefore could not have been traded on the same scale as the horses and sheep, two other animal species mentioned by Constantine VII. There is no doubt, however, that the Pechenegs were engaged in the breeding of large horned cattle.

As a basic branch of the nomad economy, pastoralism provided access to a number of essential products. Above all, it provided food. These animals were bred for meat, among other things, so the nomadic menu included sheep and beef, as well as goat and horse meat.[155] The latter, as a high-calorie food,[156] had a particularly high nutritional value, and also contained minerals, vitamins A and B, and amino acids.[157] Animals were usually slaughtered in autumn, when

151 See the discussion on trade below.

152 Gardīzī: Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 166; Zakhoder 1967, 75. A.P. Martinez explains the relevant passage in a slightly different way (1982, 152).

153 Pletneva 1958, 188.

154 Pletneva 1958, 187.

155 Pletneva 1958, 187; Kałużyński 1983, 61, 65; Khazanov 1984, 52–53.

156 Horsemeat contains the most calories (4090 calories per kg) of all types of meat consumed by the steppe people. Meanwhile, mutton and beef have 4043 and 2365 calories, respectively. Smith 2000, 2 (the data cited by the researcher was converted from pounds into kilograms).

157 The fact that the Pechenegs consumed this type of meat is well documented. Cf. Mich. Psell., VII 68 (p. 241); Sewter 1953, 242. Ott.Fr., VI 10 (pp. 271–272).

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livestock, thanks to the abundance of food in summer, had gained weight.[158] The nomads' livestock above also supplied milk, which was consumed in various forms;[159] however, milk production was not constant all year round. Having been exhausted by the severe conditions during winter, the animals in late winter and early spring produced almost no milk.[160] Therefore, while in winter the nomads' diet was based on meat, in summer, dairy products were most commonly consumed. In the case of the Pechenegs, we have been able to confirm the use of blood from livestock as food.[161] However, its use for this purpose was probably relatively rare. This seems to be proven by analogous data from other steppe peoples. It cannot be excluded that blood was consumed in extreme situations, e.g., during an exhausting march, as is clearly indicated in Marco Polo's account.[162] Blood was also obtained during the slaughter of animals, when, as the example of the Mongols shows, it was stored and added to broths and sausages.[163] Although consumed in a smaller quantities than milk, some basic plant products, i.e., vegetables and certain types of cereals, were also a part of the diet of each nomad.[164] Animal skins provided material for clothing, while sheep wool was used to make felt that was used to cover yurts.[165]

Extensive pastoralism involved the need for frequent migration and changes in encampment sites. The migrations of Eurasian steppe peoples, who mainly inhabited areas within the temperate zone, occurred quite regularly, based on seasonal changes. Their routes were generally linear and longitudinal, i.e., they usually ran along the north-south axis. They usually travelled north in summer. Here they found better pastures on which, despite the warm season, vegetation continued to grow. In winter, the animals grazed in the south, where

158 Kałużyński 1983, 66; Allsen 2001, 128.

159 Kałużyński 1983, 69; Moszyński 1996, 43–45; Tryjarski 1975, 201; Allsen 2001, 128.

160 Moszyński 1996, 46; Kałużyński 1983, 68.

161 Mich.Psell., VII 68 (p. 241); Sewter 1953, 242. Cf. Paroń 2011, 129–130.

162 Mar.Polo, I 54.

163 Allsen 2001, 128.

164 Contrary to the common stereotype, plants sometimes comprised a larger proportion of the nomadic diet than meat. According to research by Sergei Vainshtein, the Tuva inhabitants, like the Khalkha Mongols in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, obtained 55.31% of their calorie intake from the consumption of milk and milk products, 24.38% from the consumption of plant products (sic!) and 20.31% from eating meat. Vainshtein 1991, 122; Maiskii, 1921, 156. However, it is worth noting here studies according to which steppe people consumed only small amounts of cereal products. There merely provided a supplement (albiet an essential one) to their diet. Shakhanova 1989, 114. Of more in general on nomadic diet: Khazanov 1984, 52.

165 Pletneva 1958, 189–190; Kałużyński 1983, 61.

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it was warmer, thanks to which they were able to extract food from under a thinner layer of snow. In general, we can say that the main factor that determined the route of migration in summer was access to water, and in winter, access to fodder. A similar form of migration was practiced by the Black Sea steppe-dwellers.[166] Giovanni da Pian del Carpine noted that nomads stayed in the Black Sea region throughout the winter. Similar observations can also be found in Herodotus, Strabo and other authors.[167] Regular invasions of Rus' in the summer by the Cumans also proves that at that time of the year these steppe-dwellers were in the forest-steppe, not far from the borders Kievan Rus'.[168] In winter, however, the Byzantine Empire's possessions were probably at greater risk. It would seem that the characteristics of the migrations presented here could also be applied to the Pechenegs.

The portage of one's belongings during migratory journeys required adequate means of transport; this was supplied by the nomads' herds. It is possible that steers were harnessed to the carts, although in illustrations in the *Radziwiłł Chronicle* we can also clearly see horses serving as draught animals.[169] The Mongols also used camels for such purposes,[170] though such practices in the case of the Pechenegs have not been confirmed. During wars and plundering expeditions, mounted units naturally rode horses.

The dominance of extensive pastoralism in the economy of the steppe did not exclude the existence of other ways of making a livelihood. Shortages in foodstuffs were compensated for by hunting, the development of which, as we have already seen, was favoured by the rich fauna of the Black Sea steppe.[171] Hunting activities could either be limited in scale, involving a small number of people, or take the form of relatively large, well-organized expeditions in which the whole tribe or clan participated. The Mongols are known to have organized hunting expeditions with such great fanfare that they resembled in some ways military excursions.[172] Some researchers are even inclined to suppose that these events played the role of military exercises, the aim of which was to educate participants in skills useful on the battlefield.[173] It is difficult

166 Khazanov 1984, 50–52.
167 Cf. Chapter 1 of the present book.
168 Golden 1991, 78.
169 Pletneva 1958, 187, 202 (fig. 25, 26); Kałużyński 1983, 61.
170 Kałużyński 1983, 84; Khazanov 1984, 49.
171 Pletneva 1958, 186; Tryjarski 1975a, 498. For more in general on hunting among the Altai and Amur peoples: Sinor 1968, 119–127.
172 Olbricht, Pinks 1980, 117–118. Cf. Kałużyński 1983, 62–65; 1970, 28. The practice of group hunting was widespread among Eurasian steppe people. Moszyński 1996, 36; Dąbrowski 1975, 107; Szymański 1979, 71; Mukhamejanov 2000, 288–289.
173 Kałużyński 1983, 63–64.

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to say to what extent these observations can be applied to the Pechenegs. It would seem, however, that we could assume they also most likely organized larger hunting expeditions. The Pechenegs probably also engaged in wildcrafting, but we are unable to say anything definite about this.

Agriculture is usually perceived as a complementary and less typical form of economic activity for nomads. However, they had to develop a means of obtaining agricultural products because some of these were essential to their lives.[174] One way was simply to engage in farming, adapting it to a nomadic way of life. Examples of such practices are provided by data from cultural anthropologists and, in the case of historical societies, from written sources. In the mid-20th century, the Selenga Mongols sowed rye, barley, and wheat on plots of land alongside a river that had been previously loosened with the help of a wooden lister plough. The thickest clods of earth were broken up by hand. Sowing was usually carried out in spring. The plots were left to grow over the summer and harvested in autumn upon the nomads' return. Mature cereals were picked like grass without the use of sickles.[175] The Khalkha Mongols had a specific division of labour in their farming. Wealthy families entrusted the job of looking after their sown fields to fellow nomads who were poor and possessed no livestock.[176] Very interesting information can be found in the account of the 15th-century Italian traveller Giosafat Barbaro. He claimed that in February the subjects of the Golden Horde who were engaged in farming were called upon to make preparations for the upcoming sowing period. In March, they sowed grain on designated plots of land, which were located two days away from their encampment sites at the time the call to prepare the plots was made. After completing their field work, they returned to their horde. When the sowed plants were ripe, they separated from the horde once again to harvest the crop. According to Barbaro, the Khan himself was said to personally oversee work in the fields.[177] The information of the Italian traveller leaves no doubt that we are dealing with a method of tillage typical of nomads, while the involvement of the state apparatus and the ruler himself seems to prove that this form of economic activity, although supplementary, was very important for the Golden Horde Tatars.

In addition to cultivating their own plant products, steppe-dwellers also obtained them from settled populations, for whom agriculture was the main

174 Cf. especially Khazanov's general comments (1984, 52–53). For more about the special case of the Tuvans, see Vainshtein 1991, 143–147.

175 Róna-Tas 1959, 443–465; Di Cosmo 1994, 1100.

176 Vreeland 1957, 46.

177 Io.Bar., 125 (text), 150 (translation). Cf. Zajączkowski 1968, 231.

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source of income. Contrary to stereotypical beliefs reinforced by some written sources, within the borders of the Great Steppe, which stretched from Manchuria to the Hungarian Plain, there were many enclaves inhabited by agricultural populations, some of which dated back to the Bronze Age.[178] Their presence provided conditions for interaction between nomadic and settled communities. The nomads were thus able to purchase the crops they needed through trade or receive them in tribute. The latter method required the nomads to impose their political domination over the settled farmers. Among the many nomadic peoples who did so were the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu),[179] Scythians,[180] European Huns,[181] Ashina Turks,[182] Avars,[183] and Khazars.[184] Agricultural products were also obtained from neighbouring sovereign states that were threatened by the nomadic invasions and purchased their security with annual 'gifts'. A similar course of action is well documented in the case of China, for which it was often more economical to pay the tribute demanded by steppe peoples than to respond in kind to their armed aggression.[185] It is worth noting, however, that this method of obtaining crops did not play as large a role on the steppe as was once thought.[186] Necessary agricultural products could also be acquired through trade.[187]

In considering the role of agriculture among the Pechenegs, we need to address an additional issue: the gradual reduction in the role of pastoralism and increasing importance of agriculture and other forms of economic activity in the steppe economy. Soviet researchers, including Aleksander Iakubovskii, have usually associated this process with feudalization and the emergence of a group of nomads incapable of supporting themselves from pastoralism alone, forcing them to cultivate the land, which entailed changes in their lifestyle.[188] This kind of forced sedentarization occurred mainly among impoverished nomads, and those who fell victim to it generally regarded it as a temporary solution to their economic difficulties. As soon as their material situation

178 Di Cosmo 1994, 1096–1115.
179 Di Cosmo 1994, 1094; 2002, 169–170; Kradin 2007, 126–127.
180 Khazanov 1975b, 427, 429–430; Di Cosmo 1994, 1110–1111.
181 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 174–178.
182 Skaff 2002, 364–72; 2012, 65–71.
183 Szymański 1979, 66; Beranová 1986, 85–91; Pohl 1988, 189–195.
184 Noonan 2007, 207–244.
185 Dąbrowski 1975, 34; Barfield 1992, 46–47. The latter researcher emphasizes that the quantities of grain and wine delivered to Xiongnu, confirmed in Chinese sources, were sufficient only to maintain the court of their ruler.
186 Di Cosmo 1994, 1115–1118.
187 Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 1, 452–455; Jagchid, Symons 1989, 24–51.
188 Grekov, Iakubovskii 1950, 19; Pletneva 1958, 188; Fedorov-Davydov 1966, 199.

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somewhat improved, however, they tried to return to their previous way of life and the activities associated with it. Apart from an attachment to the native ethnos, a mechanism that fueled such a desire to return was the fear of being scorned by fellow tribesmen and the threat of exclusion from their community. We know that among the Oghuz those who ended their nomadic way of life lost some of their rights.[189] An obvious and much stronger incentive to take up agricultural work was created by environmental factors. Both the Bashkirs and the Volga-Kama Bulgars found themselves in areas with insufficient pastureland and were forced to look for other ways to obtain food, including agriculture. An important factor favouring such a metamorphosis was close contact with settled communities, for whom land cultivation was the main source of income.[190]

In the case of the Pechenegs, farming was most likely practiced as a secondary form of economic activity. This conclusion is based not only on comparative data, but also on accounts found in written sources. It is more difficult to answer the question whether there were communities dependent mainly on farming among the Pechenegs or those people under their rule. During the early stages of the Pechenegs' history, there is no data indicating this. It is doubtful that the core of the ethnos was ever comprised of inhabitants of the oases of Transoxania.[191] Not until the Pechenegs' migration to the Black Sea steppe were the conditions created for close contact with agricultural populations, in this case, people of the Dridu culture living on the Siret, Prut and Dniester Rivers. The nature of their relationship with the Pechenegs is unclear. It seems, however, that until the 11th century, when the agricultural population began to withdraw from the lower reaches of the rivers, the relations between the two communities may have been good.[192] It cannot be ruled out that the steppe-dwellers imposed some form of subjugation on the Dridu population, though the political structure of the Pechenegs seems to exclude a particularly strong and burdensome form of subjection. Political domination may have been accompanied by the acquisition of agricultural produce through tribute or forced unequal trade, the latter of which is confirmed by archaeological sources.[193] Plant products could also be obtained by the Pechenegs through

189 Agadzhanov 1969, 109; Khazanov 1984, 82–84. For a similar observation about the Scythians: Khazanov 1975, 148–149.

190 Pletneva 1958, 188. Por. Cf. Rudenko 1955, 61–65.

191 Cf. discussion in Chapter 3 of the present book.

192 Diaconu 1970, 37–48; 1975, 235–237; Spinei 1975, 271–276; 1986, 103; Dobroliubskii 1986, 24; Paroń 2009, 458–460.

193 Spinei 1975, 271–273; 1986, 103.

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external trade, which has been confirmed in the case of Byzantium and Rus'. We will return to this issue later in this chapter.

Close contact with people with distinctly different cultures apparently did not result in broad cultural change among the nomads. The natural conditions of the Black Sea steppe were conducive to animal breeding and did not force them limit this form of economic activity in favour of others. Moreover, the intensity of contacts between Dridu and Pecheneg farmers was probably not as high as in the case of the Danube Bulgars and the Slavic population subordinate to them. In addition, a sedentary way of life and the agricultural activities that accompanied it were generally disliked by nomads, which meant that the process of their sedentarization and agrarianization, even in conditions that were exceptionally favourable to this, progressed slowly. This situation was probably the same with the Pechenegs. It is striking that the first mentions of their practicing tillage date back to the mid-11th century, i.e., the period just after they left the Black Sea steppe. John Skylitzes' chronicle tells us that after the entire ethnos had entered the territory of the Byzantine Empire and formally surrendered to Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, the Pechenegs were settled around three places in the territory of today's Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia (Sofia, Ovče Pole, and Niš). They were required to pay tribute and cultivate the land there. They did so for a period of time, but soon rose up in rebellion and apparently abandoned the occupation.[194] In Anna Komnena's *Alexiad*, we find a report about a large group of 'Scythians' (γένος τί σκυθικὸν) crossing the Danube in 1085. In the breaks between military campaigns, they were said to plough and sow millet and wheat.[195] These 'Scythians' are usually identified as Pechenegs;[196] however, the date of their migration (almost 40 years after the main wave of Pechenegs) and the formulation used by the scholarly Byzantine princess suggest that this group may have been a mixture of nomadic ethne withdrawing from the Black Sea steppe under pressure from the Cumans. Pechenegs may have been present during these events depicted, but we do not know what role they played in them. We must therefore treat the above-mentioned report with great caution, because we are unable to state to what extent it concerns the Pechenegs themselves. It is interesting to note that these 'Scythians' practiced ploughing, because it proves that they used more sophisticated methods of tillage. However, it is not advisable to attribute too much importance to agriculture in their economy, if only because of the fact

194 Io.Scyl., 459, 461; Wortley 2010, 430, 431.
195 An.Kom., VI 14.1 (p. 199); Sewter 2009, 182. Cf. also Chapter 7 of the present book.
196 Macartney 1929, 349; Tryjarski 1975a, 527.

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that Anna Komnena's account shows that they engaged in it on a casual basis during breaks between plundering expeditions.[197]

The information from both sources refers to the final chapter in the Pechenegs' history, after they were expelled from the Black Sea steppe and forced to seek shelter in the territory of neighbouring countries, mainly Byzantium. In addition to undergoing political change, they also experienced changes in their natural environment: they found themselves in areas with limited possibilities for continuing to practice extensive pastoralism. Given this situation, the importance of agriculture – thus far regarded as a secondary branch of their economy – certainly increased. It cannot be ruled out that this shift had already begun somewhat earlier, during their stay on the Black Sea steppe. The defeats suffered in the early-11th century in battles with Rus' and the Uzes had caused the Pechenegs to lose some of their pastures and herds, which, even if accompanied by a significant loss in their population, must have made it difficult to provide for themselves. This most likely forced them to make up for these shortages through plunder, which is best evidenced by their invasions of the Balkan provinces of Byzantium in the 1020s and 1030s.[198] The defeats mentioned above also led to a significant impoverishment of the Pechenegs. In comparison to earlier periods of prosperity, there appeared a greater number of déclassé nomads, for whom agriculture probably provided an essential means of support. However, the cultural changes outlined here, especially as depicted in the information provided by Skylitzes, were adopted with great reluctance.

Crafts were also a part of the Pechenegs' economy. A more detailed description of its characteristics, however, requires a few introductory remarks. It is easy to augment the stereotypical image of a nomad as a destroyer and plunderer with an equally distorted vision of him being a versatile producer. It is hard to deny that the level of production on the steppe often did not equal that of the craftsmanship in settled communities, especially when the latter were represented by highly developed civilizations (China, Byzantium, Persia).

197 Spinei 2009, 227. The researcher assumes that the 'Scythians' described by Anna Komnena could not have been the Pechenegs, but were rather members of a community that lived in the area of the Paristrion province and joined immigrants in attacks on the Byzantine Empire. However, this reasoning contradicts the account of Anna Komnena, who clearly states that it was newcomers from across the Danube who worked the land before they invaded the provinces of the Empire. Their *modus operandi* seems to fully match that of the nomads who entered the Balkans. They probably came in winter or autumn, taking advantage of the freezing of the Danube, in spring they were able to cultivate their fields, and then, in summer or early autumn, organize a military expedition. Komnena's 'Scythians' were therefore a nomadic group, but it is difficult to identify them precisely.

198 Cf. Chapter 6 of the present book.

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The desire to obtain various luxury goods, rare among nomads, is a very frequent motif in the literature of neighbouring civilizations. It cannot be denied that the development of more sophisticated forms of artistic crafts was often possible in nomadic communities thanks to the acquisition of technological from more developed areas. These 'borrowings' were sometimes achieved by means of brute force through the abduction of experts in certain types of craftsmanship.[199] Yet, it is hard not to notice that the inhabitants of the steppe were also able to produce very artistically sophisticated items. The conditions for the development of highly developed crafts, however, were created only within nomadic early-state organisms. In such societies, there existed an elite with a strong interest in manifesting its prestige that was able, thanks to its social and economic position, to create the conditions necessary for the operation of permanent specialized craft workshops. These were often established in centres which functions as a kind of capital, or central hub, for a nomadic empire.[200] In the case of the egalitarian and segmented political organisms created by the Pechenegs, the existence of such a production centre for luxury craftsmanship is much less likely. This does not mean, however, that specialized production was completely alien to them. It must have existed, though on a smaller scale. The Pechenegs were able to process certain types of nonferrous metals, especially silver, and to a lesser extent, gold.[201] According to the Muslim authors mentioned earlier in this study, whose data refers to the 9th century, affluence among the Pechenegs manifested itself in the possession of numerous gold and silver vessels and silver belts.[202] Appliqué work on these

199 Małowist 1976, 541, 543, 553, 554. After they had seized a city, the Mongols usually spared the craftsmen, who were distributed among the dignitaries of the empire and usually taken to the east. Cf. also data from William of Rubruck on the settlement of the Teutons who lived in the town of Talas (20 days from Samarkand), who were then transferred to the town of Bolaq, located a month's journey west, where they mined gold and forged weapons for Möngke Khan. The Franciscan also mentions several times a Parisian goldsmith, master Wilhelm Buchier, who worked for Möngke in Karakorum. Rubruck, XXIII 2–3 (pp. 224–225), XXIX 3 (p. 253), XXX 2–3 (pp. 276–277). Marcin Broniewski, Stefan Batory's envoy to the Khan of Crimea, claims that the Tatars were not involved in crafts or trade. In the Khanate, these economic activities were left to Christian slaves and to Turks, Armenians, Jews, Circassians, Petyhorcy, Philistines and Roma. Broniewski, XXIII (Latin text), 70 (Polish translation).

200 Małowist 1976; Khazanov 2005, 168–172; Pohl 2008b, 97–120.

201 Tryjarski 1975a, 533.

202 Gardīzī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 165; Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 222 (Bakrī writes about richly decorated, not silver belts); Marwazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2010, 250 (Marwazī mentions the Pechenegs possessed silver and gold, with no indication of the form in which these metals were found in the steppe). Cf. Zachoder 1967, 74.

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latter items could have indeed been made by craftsmen living on the steppe.[203] Archaeological evidence attributed to the Pechenegs also indicates their ability to produce other silver, and much less often gold, jewellery (pendants, bracelets, earrings, rings, appliqué work on horse tack).[204] However, they were less likely to make gold or silver vessels on their own.[205]

Contrary to the information found in written sources, the archaeological materials attributed to the Pechenegs are most often ornaments made of bronze. This applies to practically all of the above-mentioned categories of item, from appliqué work on belts to the decoration on horse tack.[206]

Iron was even more widely used in the Pecheneg economy. These steppe-dwellers mastered the technique of metal-working, which is evidenced by the frequent occurrence in their burial sites of iron elements of equestrian equipment (bit, stirrup), as well as some elements of weapons (e.g., arrowheads).[207] According to Arab sources, the Pechenegs possessed many different types of weapons,[208] though these brief references don't allow us to determine exactly what types are meant here. Among the archaeological materials discovered, apart from arrowheads, there have also been sabres, spearheads, axes and mace heads.[209]

In all past societies, the ability to smelt metals and produce and process metal alloys was connected with the specialization of production, and the

203 Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 88; Ivanov, Krylasova 2006, 17, 25–26.

204 Chardaev 1991, 257; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 90, 93–94; Ivanov, Krylasova 2006, 17, 21–22, 28–30.

205 The question of the origins of the Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós, containing 23 vessels made of 18–22 carat gold, has yet to be resolved. However, Joseph Németh's hypothesis that it came from the Pechenegs has generally not been accepted. Németh 1932; 1971, 1–51. Cf. Csebe 1922, 213; Gyula 1974; Tryjarski 1975a, 596–597; 1975, 238–239; Waklinow 1984, 173–181; Erdal 1988, 221–234; Göbl, Róna-Tas 1995, 9–20; Bálint 1989, 187–192; 2010 (The treasure belonged to an Avar princely family from the 7th–8th century, which lived in the southern or eastern part of the Carpathian Basin. 2010, 624).

206 Bronze was also used to make famous openwork pendants, in oval or heart-shaped form filled with ornamentation which is seen by some researchers as solar symbolism, while others interpret it as a motif of the tree of life, and yet others see it as a bird with open wings. Some pieces had an elongated ending with a hole at the end. Some archaeologists also consider the artifact to be a kind of grooming utensil (Russian: *kopoushka*). Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 88–89; Ivanov, Krylasova 2006, 34. This pendant is often treated as a very important ethnic indicator pointing to the presence of the Pechenegs. For a skeptical stance on this subject: Curta 2013, 168–170; Fiedler 2013, 274–276.

207 Pletneva 1958, 156–159; Dobroliubskii 1986, 50; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 82–86, 87.

208 See footnote 841.

209 Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 87–88. More on the above in the next section of this chapter.

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craftsmen who worked with metals enjoyed a special social status.[210] The situation was no different among the nomads, where people engaged in smithery and jewellery production were excluded from the traditional division of labour into men's and women's activities.[211] It cannot be ruled out that in addition to native craftsmen, foreign specialists also engaged in such work, either working among the Pechenegs or in close contact with them.[212]

In addition to the above-described artisanal production, a common form of production among nomads was based on processing raw materials supplied by their extensive herds. As shown in written sources and in the field research of contemporary ethnologists, this served mainly to satisfy the nomads' own needs, and thus functioned within a division of labour into activities typical of men and women. It was characterized by a lack of specialization and was of relatively poor quality, i.e., lacking in artistic ambition.[213] Due the abundance of leather among the Pechenegs, and their having mastered the skill of tanning, processing of this material was widespread. Women made leather sandals, boots, and probably some types of clothing, sewing them together with thread made of animal tendons. Leather was also used to make elements of horse tack, as well as bags, which replaced clay vessels, as these were not very useful in the conditions of nomadic life.[214] The Pechenegs mastered the ability to make wool felt, which was used, among other things, to cover yurts.[215] The Pechenegs were certainly also able to work in bone and horn, as is evidenced by the bone overlays of the composite bow[216] found in grave inventories and, much less frequently, appliqué on quivers.[217]

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210 Eliade 1993, 73–104. Blacksmiths and metallurgists, as 'masters of fire', enjoyed a status similar to shamans and sorcerers.

211 In the context of the division of labour: Szynkiewicz 1981, 56 (the researcher considers blacksmithing and goldsmithing to be specialized occupations, although practiced by men). On the subject of the special status of craftsmen dealing with metalworking in nomadic communities: Pohl 1988, 194. Cf. Tănase 2010, 213–225. The researcher argues that goldsmiths and blacksmiths enjoyed a high social status, but were not part of the ruling class.

212 Daniela Tănase points to the mostly wandering nature of craftsmen specialising in metalworking (2010, 224–225). V. Spinei (1986, 103) records the presence of individual objects of nomadic origin or their imitations in 'Dridu' culture sites as evidence of trade contacts. However, it is not impossible that this was in fact craftwork produced to meet the needs of the nomads.

213 Pletneva 1958, 190; Moszyński 1996, 33.

214 Pletneva 1958, 190; Kałużyński 1983, 76, 78, 81.

215 Tryjarski 1975a, 529; Kałużyński 1983, 61.

216 Pletneva 1958, 159; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 86–87, 92.

217 Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 92.

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Judging by the writings of Byzantine authors, the Pechenegs were also skilled in carpentry. This is indicated by information about their use of carts, both as a means of transport and as defensive weaponry.[218] Construction of such carts required mastering carpentry skills at a high level.

In contrast, their ability to make ceramic vessels was poorly developed. It is traditionally assumed that this was due to the fact that such items were not well suited to living conditions on the steppe. The frequent changing of encampments meant that fragile ceramics were constantly at risk of being broken during transport. Leather bags and iron boilers substituted for clay vessels. It is worth remembering, however, that in some political empires created by nomads, technologically advanced ceramic production was sometimes present, although foreign craftsmen and technology were usually responsible for their production.[219] Steppe-dwellers themselves did not master the use of the potter's wheel, so even when we find dishes, these are either imported or examples of primitive ceramics made without the use of such a wheel.[220] This also applies to the Pechenegs. Admittedly, clay vessels are sometimes found in the inventories of their graves, but only very rarely. Besides, these are usually primitive moulded pots.[221] Large, richly ornamented clay kettles, widely found on the lower and middle Danube, and whose appearance in these areas had been associated by Petre Diaconu with the Pechenegs,[222] can no longer be attributed to the nomads of the Black Sea steppe. These items appeared in the Balkans (Bulgaria) long before the Pechenegs. Moreover, to the east of the Dniester, that is, in the area they occupied for more than a century, not a single kettle of this type has been discovered.[223]

In general, the level of the Pechenegs' craftwork was not particularly high. Although it is hard to deny that they were familiar with its more specialized forms, they do not seem to have achieved a particularly impressive level of artistry. Their desire to own rare on the steppe luxury goods, which is often mentioned in written sources, is also clear.[224] Even if we try to account for the bias of some authors who were overly inclined to attribute an insatiable greed

218 An.Kom., VII 3.7 (pp. 211–212); 7.2 (pp. 220–221); 10.4 (p. 231); Sewter 2009, 193, 201, 211.

219 The ceramic production of the Golden Horde is considered an example of this. Cf. Koval' 2005, 75–86; Lavysh 2013, 121–125.

220 Pletneva 1958, 190; Kałużyński 1983, 80–81; Spinei 2009, 238.

221 Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 89, 94; Spinei 2003, 100.

222 Diaconu 1964, 249–263.

223 Spinei 2009, 238; Curta 2013, 159–161.

224 See especially DAI, VI 8–9 (p. 52/3); VII 8–17 (p. 54/5). Cf. Paroń 2007a, 107–108.

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to all barbarians, and peculiarly to steppe people,[225] it seems that behind a layer of literary *topoi* and stereotypes lay real-world experiences. The desire to obtain deficit goods grew as a result of contacts with settled communities with a significantly higher level of development in terms of material culture. This problem will be dealt with later in this chapter, so here we should limit ourselves to the observation that the desire to own luxury goods was one of the nomads' motives for carrying out looting raids against the peoples who produced these goods, this desire may have also been equally conducive to the establishment of trade contacts.

The economy of the Pechenegs, like that of most nomadic peoples, was not self-sufficient. This was not a feature typical only of steppe-people, because it is difficult to find a community that was able to satisfy all its needs relying solely on its own production, without the need to trade in goods or other means for supplementing its economic deficits. Nevertheless, extensive pastoralism made the nomadic economy particularly susceptible to crisis shocks, while hunting, gathering and primitive agriculture could not sufficiently compensate for its weaknesses to protect the steppe peoples from hunger, which, despite their indiscriminate diet, often plagued them.[226] Threatened by a lack of food, nomads, according to Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, ate 'everything that could be eaten'.[227] They did not refrain from eating the meat of dogs, wolves and foxes, the blood a mare releases when giving birth or even human lice.[228] They were even credited with practicing cannibalism in cases of extreme hunger.[229] While the eating practices of the Pechenegs may have seemed disgusting to an outside observer,[230] they were probably dictated by extreme necessity. They

225 Cf. Sinor 1978, 171–182.

226 Kałużyński 1983, 71–72.

227 di Carpine, IV 7 (p. 248). 'Cibi eorum [Mongols – A.P.] sunt omnia que mandi possunt'.

228 di Carpine, IV 7 (p. 248).

229 di Carpine, IV 7 (p. 248). '[…] et in necessitate carnes humanas manducant'. Similar practices are attributed to the Cumans by William of Rubruck. Rubruc, I 12 (p. 171). '[…] et quando venerunt Tartari tanta multitudo Comanorum intravit provinciam illam [i.e., the steppe area of Crimea – A.P.], qui omnes fugerunt usque ad ripam maris, quod comedebant se mutuo vivi morientes, secundum quod narravit michi quidam mercator, qui hoc vidit quod vivi devorabant et lacerabant dentibus carnes crudas mortuorum, sicut canes cadavera'.

230 Cf. remarks of Michael Attaleiates, who states that the food of the Pechenegs is simply repulsive. Mich.Att., 52/53.

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were also said to eat lice,[231] cats[232] and human meat.[233] The last of these 'items' probably appeared in their menu only in the most extreme situations.[234]

Survival on the steppe was difficult, especially on the turn of winter and spring, when the provisions accumulated for the winter were exhausted, the animals could not be slaughtered, and their milk yields fell to a minimum. At that time, glazed frost was also experienced, which was extremely dangerous for livestock.[235] However, if there were no major losses among the herds, those fortunate enough to survive until spring could now safely await the coming seasons. However, if their situation was worse, i.e., there were significant losses among the animals in their herds, the nomads would be threatened with famine throughout the coming year.

Faced with such a state of affairs, they were forced to look for additional methods of earning a livelihood. These included trade and organized plunder. The first practice should theoretically have limited the second, as the establishment of effective trade contacts was not conducive to a state of temporary or permanent armed conflict. Among some steppe peoples it seems that a specific evolution can be observed, consisting in a gradual reduction in looting attacks and their replacement with trade. The material gains acquired from plunder must have diminished over time, as it tended to either lead attacked communities to organize more effective defences or simply leave threatened areas. Looting attacks thus either no longer made sense or became a difficult and risky undertaking without any guarantee of success.[236] Establishing trade contacts also had its positive sides for the settled communities neighbouring the nomads, because the latter, in having satisfied their needs through trade or forced tribute, lost one at their primary motives for organizing plundering expeditions.

231 LeoDiac., IX 12 (p. 157).

232 Ott.Fr., VI 10 (p. 272).

233 Ad.Brem., Schol. 17 (18), p. 80. 'Mahari sunt populi Sclavorum, qui sunt ab oriente Behemorum, habentque in circuitu hinc Pomeranos et Polanos, inde Ungros et crudelissimam gentem Pescinagos, qui humanis carnibus vescuntur'. The consumption of corpses is attributed to the Pechenegs by Matthew of Edessa. Mat.Ed., 89.

234 It is worth mentioning that pointing to cannibalism has a classifying value and indicates the extreme wildness of the Pechenegs and their distant geographic location, at the ends of the world. Cannibalism was also associated with extreme cruelty. Cf. Paroń 2011, 131–132.

235 Khazanov 1984, 73.

236 Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, I, 452–455; Sinor 1972, 174–177; Gumilev 1997, 33.

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However, the economic weakness of the nomads posed a barrier to normalizing contacts. In conditions of equal exchange, they had less to offer to their settled trade partners. The assortment of goods they had to offer was limited to animal products, usually in the form of livestock. Of these, the steppe-dwellers could easily find buyers for their horses. Their endurance and ability to obtain food on their own were both widely appreciated.[237] The nomad's mounts were also the only ones able to withstand the hardships of a journey through the steppe. However, these animals were practically all the nomads had to offer outside of surpluses of other animals from their herds. But the sale of an excessive number of animals led to disturbances in the herd balance, which usually had dire economic consequences.[238] In addition, the position of the nomads was weakened by the fact that they were often more interested in trade than their settled neighbours.[239]

The weakness of the nomads' economy seems to have made them inclined to violence. The threat of invasion therefore did not disappear, but became a tool for establishing economic relations that were more advantageous for the steppe-dwellers. Through the skillful use of brute force, nomadic communities were able to transcend the limits of their economies by imposing forms of unequal trade on their neighbours, which was in fact a hidden form of tribute. The Pechenegs' military superiority not only provided a means of achieving political domination, but also opened the way for more effective use of trade relations. If a particular nomadic political organism ruled over an area through which important trade routes ran, it could use its political dominance to organize an extensive trade network. Manufacturing weaknesses were overcome through tributes provided by subjugated populations. In this way, nomadic communities could become not only the organizers of such trade, but also participants in it.

The Khazars provide a concrete historical example of such behaviour. After a period marked by plunder and conquest, they created an empire sometimes referred to as the *Pax Chazarica*, whose economy was based on proceeds received from trade along the Volga route and on tribute provided

237 Kałużyński 1983, 82. Steppe horses had been sold in China since at least the Han Dynasty (late 3rd century BC): Gumilev 1996, 23; 1997, 32; Di Cosmo 2002, 232 (the researcher emphasizes, however, that the Han started breeding their own horses very quickly); Jagchid, Symons 1989, 167–172.

238 Khazanov 1984, 204. The researcher cites the example of 19th-century Kazakhs, who were persuaded by the tsar's administrators, supported by merchants operating on the steppe, to sell such a large part of their herds that they could not naturally restore their original numbers. As a result, the breeders were ruined.

239 Khazanov 1984, 202.

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by conquered ethne. However, this system was created and supported by the rational use of violence. The security of trading operations depended on curbing the Khazars' warlike neighbours, including the Pechenegs. According to ibn Rusta, the *išа*, the Khazars' military chief, organized penal expeditions against them each year.[240]

The wealth and prosperity which, according to Muslim authors, the Pechenegs enjoyed in the 9th century, when their lands were in the Transvolga, probably originated to a large extent from plunder. This is indicated not only by the above-mentioned comments by ibn Rusta, but also by other Muslim authors. The Pechenegs were said both to attack all the neighbouring peoples and be targets of aggression from them, as well. One Arab writer even states that all the neighbouring ethne attacked them, kidnapped them, and sold them.[241] However, one can assume that the Pechenegs were not only victims of violence, but also provoked it and responded to it. It should also be assumed that the practice of kidnapping neighbours was not alien to them. Unfortunately, we are unable to say anything more about the involvement of the Pechenegs in slave trading apart from the fact that in later periods of their history they occasionally engaged in it.[242]

In the 9th century, their role in the trade was probably still quite limited. It is significant that according to Muslim authors, the road from the Pechenegs' land to the Khazars led through 'forest and thickets'. In addition, these authors unanimously emphasized the aggressive, bellicose nature of the steppe people. This information, we should remember, came from merchants who reached the Pecheneg lands in spite of these obstacles. We should therefore assume that these lands were far from primary trade routes, though it is not possible to say the Pechenegs were not at all involved in such trade.

240 Rusta: ibn Rusta, 29; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 54. Cf. also Chapter 3 of the present book.

241 Gardīzī: Martinez 1982, 151; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 164–165. Cf. Zachoder 1967, 72–74. In Martinez's translation, the Pechenegs are not victims of invasions by their neighbours, but they encourage neighbouring peoples to attack each other and supply them with slaves for sale.

242 Constantine Porphyrogenitus claimed that when Magyars or the Rus' are on a war expedition, the Pechenegs would easily invade their country and enslave their wives and children (DAI, IV 10–13 (pp. 50–53). It is reasonable to assume that the abductees were at least partly sold into slavery. John Skylitzes, on the other hand, clearly states that Kegenes, one of the Pechenegs chiefs either murdered or sold his compatriots whom he managed to capture, (Io.Scyl., 459; Wortley 2010, 430). Psellos attributed the same conduct to the Pechenegs (Mich.Psell., VII 69 (p. 242); Sewter 1953, 242). However, it is not possible to determine the scale of human trafficking or the degree of involvement of the Pechenegs in this practice. Akades N. Kurat claimed that the Rus' would sell slaves to the Pechenegs (Kurat 1937, 68). A sceptical stance on this issue: Golden 1991, 71 (n. 52).

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Their migration to the Black Sea steppe seems to have brought about significant changes. The Pechenegs probably did not completely abandon their looting raids. In fact, they may initially even have intensified them, wishing to recoup the material losses they suffered as a result of defeats they suffered at the hands of the Uzes and Khazars.[243] The victims of their attacks may have been those living in territories belonging to eastern Slavs, Magyars or Danube Bulgars, or the area around the Byzantine city and *thema* of Kherson in Crimea.[244] Constantine Porphyrogenitus also extensively described their attacks on Rus' traders travelling along the route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks'. The section running along the Lower Dnieper was an excellent place to prepare an ambush due to the need to portage river cargo around the Dnieper rapids. This provided the Pechenegs with an opportunity for organizing attacks on the Rus' traders.[245] However, this case is somewhat special. It is worth remembering that the Rus' had entered an area controlled by the Pechenegs, and if they did so armed and against the will of the steppe-dwellers, the reaction of the latter described by Constantine VII seems to be fully understandable.

This period of intensified aggression, which may have been motivated by the Pechenegs' desire not only to compensate for previous economic losses, but also to define the boundaries of their new territory and sphere of influence, was probably followed by a period of calm in relations with their neighbours. Therefore, there seems to be no reason to blame the Pechenegs for causing the collapse of the trade route that led from Sarkel to the Lower Danube.[246] On the contrary, there is much evidence of the steppe people's involvement in the trade it fostered. Although Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentions several times that the Pechenegs could pose a serious threat to neighbouring political powers, at the same time he cites interesting examples of their participation in trade. The Rus' are said to have purchased sheep, horned cattle and horses from them. According to the learned emperor, they did so because

243 Wojciech Szymański pointed to a similar phenomenon in the case of the Avars. (Szymański 1979, 67–68).

244 DAI, I–V (pp. 48–53). Cf. also Chapter 6 of the present book.

245 DAI, II 18–23 (p. 50/51); IX 65–71 (p. 60/61). Cf. Paroń 2007a, 103–105.

246 Tadeusz Lewicki does so (Lewicki 1956, 34). Cf. Pletneva 1958, 189, 191–192. E. Tryjarski finds ambivalence in the Pechenegs. The nomads were supposed to benefit from trade, but allegedly they could not refrain from looting merchants (Tryjarski 1975a, 541–545). For a similar judgment, but in a more general form, with the reservation that the trade in goods in the steppe did not cease completely: Spinei 2009, 243–244. P.B. Golden recognizes the occurrence of plunder and trade in the Pechenegs as two closely related forms of economic activity. The steppe people were supposed to plunder and then sell the booty (Golden 1991, 83); Noonan 1992, 320–321 (the trade on the steppe never ceased for a long time).

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there was a shortage of such animals in Rus'.[247] Witold Hensel has questioned the accuracy of this information. He pointed out that some East Slavic tribes (the Dulebi) had a significant number of horses at their disposal. Moreover, from at least the early 12th century, these animals were quite widespread in Rus', which is proven by their wide use for cultivation on small farms. Hensel thus assumes that the Rus' purchased horses in order to maintain peaceful relations with the steppe-dwellers. This would therefore be an example of unequal trade, from which the Pechenegs were the main beneficiaries.[248] The inhabitants of the *thema* and city of Kherson were also involved in trade with them. Constantine VII writes that the Pechenegs performed services for the Byzantine emperor and the Khersonites. Judging by the information contained in the source, this could not have been purely military in nature. It was decided by way of agreements concluded between the parties, represented on one side by a single Pecheneg, and on the other by a Khersonite. The partners agreed on the type and amount of payment the nomads were to receive for their services. The means of payment consisted of purple silk robes (βλαττία), silk ribbons (πρανδία), pieces of silk (χαρέρια), golden brocade (σημέντα), pepper, scarlet or Parthian leather and other luxury goods, which steppe people particularly desired.[249] The type of agreement, one between two individuals, seems to clearly indicate that this was not a political or military agreement, but rather a commercial one. The Pechenegs hired by the Khersonites may have acted as intermediaries, pursuing their interests in 'Russia and Chazaria and Zichia[250] and all the parts beyond',[251] which would indicate the significant involvement of the nomads in the growing trade in goods in the Black Sea steppe region. According to information provided by Constantine VII, trade with nomads was very important for the Khersonites. They were said to purchase wax and animal skins from the Pechenegs, which they then sold in Byzantium.[252] According to the learned emperor, if they could not find buyers for these goods in Romania, 'the Khersonites cannot live'.[253] The Steppe-dwellers supplied goods that

247 DAI, II 5–8 (pp. 48–51).

248 Hensel 1987, 113, 688. Cf. Noonan 1992, 308–309 (the purchase of these animals by the Rus' resulted from purely economic motivations).

249 DAI, VI (p. 52/3). Identification of goods used as payment to the Pechenegs: DAI-Com., 14–15; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989, 289 (n. 5).

250 This toponym was used in European literature from the times of antiquity (Strabo XI 2.12) to the early 15th century. This probably refers to the area of Cherkessia, especially the part located on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. Göckenjan 1997, 126–127.

251 DAI, VI 4–6 (p. 52/3).

252 DAI, LIII 531–532 (p. 286/7). '[…] τὰ βυρσάρια καὶ κηρία, ἅπερ ἀπὸ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν πραγματεύονται, […]'.

253 DAI, LIII 532 (p. 286/7). '[…] οὐ δύνανται ζῆσαι'.

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they probably could not produce themselves. Wax was a product of the forest economy which the Pechenegs could obtain from the Slavs[254] or people of the Dridu culture. Animal skins, especially if there was a culling of fur animals, probably came from the Pechenegs' northern neighbours. We can only guess how they obtained both types of goods. Perhaps, at least in part, they were payment for animals delivered by the nomads to Rus' or tribute forced upon the latter under threat of invasion.

A brief mention that complements information provided by the Byzantine emperor in *De administrando imperio* can be found in the Arab historian al-Mas'ūdī's *Golden Meadows*, which also dates back to the mid-10th century. In it he claims that merchants came to the Pechenegs from 'the country of the Khazar, Alans, Báb el-Awáb [Derbent] and others'.[255]

The information provided by both authors not only proves that the presence of the Pechenegs on the Black Sea steppe did not contribute to the collapse of local trade routes, but also seems to indicate their strong commitment to far-reaching trade. Their relations with the east, Khazaria, northern Caucasus (Derbent, Alania, Zichia), as well as with Rus', are particularly demonstrative of this. The Pechenegs were most likely included in the network of trade links formerly created by the Khazars, then extended to connect with the route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks'. Within this system the Pechenegs acted as intermediaries, a position facilitated by their location within the steppe niche, surrounded by powers interested in trade. It also seems that in certain circumstances it was much more convenient to order the delivery of a specific product from the nomads, as the Khersonites did, than to organize a risky expedition on their own. As we have seen, the political body of the Pechenegs lacked a clearly defined centre capable of organizing safe passage for merchant caravans through Patzinacia, following the example of the Khazars. A merchant travelling through these lands was probably exposed to threats similar to those experienced by Ahmad ibn Fadlan during his journey to the ruler of Volga-Kama Bulgars. In order to get permission to continue his journey, the Abbasid's diplomat was forced to repeatedly pay ransom to various local leaders of the Uzes or to ordinary petty intruders who stopped his caravan.[256] The experience of ibn Fadlan shows that these were not insurmountable obstacles. He himself writes that in order to cross the lands of the Uzes, a Muslim had to first make friends with one of them. This friend would provide the traveller

254 Cf. Nosek, Szromba 1961, 88; Warnke 1987, 545; Litavrin 1999, 425–426; Schreiner 2013, 214.

255 al-Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 61; Pellat 1962, 178; Sprenger 1841, 449.

256 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 206/207, 210/211, 212/213; Zeki Validi Togan, 1939, 26, 29, 31; Kovalevskii 1956, 127–128, 129–130; Frye 2005, 37–38, 39–41.

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with accommodation and food, lend him horses or camels, and grant him a loan. The animals and money were returned on the return trip. In exchange for this help, the Muslim brought gifts to his friend and his wife.[257] Merchants coming to the Pechenegs from Islamic countries probably followed the same advice. Ahmad ibn Fadlan's account also shows that the journey through the steppe was a difficult logistical undertaking. Only nomads could provide proper means of transport. This circumstance additionally justified entrusting them with the delivery of necessary goods, as the Khersonites did.

The trade network created by the Khazars was devastated together with their state (in the year 965). A short time later, pressure from new Turkic ethne reduced the importance of trade routes running across the Black Sea steppe. These phenomena were also accompanied by the expansion of Rus', a consequence of which was the Pechenegs being deprived of their role as intermediaries in the trade in goods. The expansion of Kiev by Vladimir the Great, thanks to which the city became an important trade centre, was accompanied by its conquest and pillaging of Kherson in 989.[258] Although the Crimean city survived the Rus' invasion, its role as an important trade centre was, at least for some time, severely limited.[259] Rus' also managed to expand their borders to the northern shores of the Black Sea. The late 10th century marks the beginnings of a settlement on Velikopotemkin Island at the mouth of the Dnieper River, which is identified with Oleshe known from Rus' chronicles.[260] The Rurik Dynasty also took control of Tmutarakan,[261] giving them not only the ability to trade through the Kerch Strait, but also direct contact with the northern Caucasus (mainly with Zichia-Circassia).

The Rus', especially Vladimir, managed to destroy or take control of the majority of the Pechenegs' trade contacts at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries. In addition, the latter lost their hegemony on the Black Sea steppe as

257 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 204–207; Zeki Validi Togan, 23; Kovalevskii, 126; Frye 2005, 35–36.

258 Andrzej Poppe assumes that this took place between April and the end of July in the year 989, although the Rus' arrived at Kherson no later than autumn of the year 988. Poppe 1976, 238–239; 1978, 18.

259 The conquest of the city by Vladimir's army resulted in the destruction of significant part of it and significant losses among the inhabitants. Kherson also stopped minting its own coins. Cf. Talis 1958, 114 (n. 54); Iakobson 1959, 65–66, 283; Poppe 1976, 239; 1978, 18; Bartoli, Kazanski 2002, 663. For a critical view on the link between the destruction of the city and Vladimir's invasion: Romanchuk 1989, 182–188 (the cause of the damage could have been an earthquake).

260 Sokul'skii 1980, 71. First mentioned in chronicles in 1084 (PVL 1, col. 205).

261 This event is usually dated to be very close to or simultaneous with the conquest of Kherson by Vladimir. Cf. Iakobson 1964, 59–60; Gadlo 1994, 79–81 (late 986 to mid-987); Chkhaidze 2008, 286 (year 988).

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a result of the pressure from the Uzes, which probably further limited their participation in local trade. In the 11th century, especially in its second quarter, the Pechenegs again appear as plunderers. In the 1030s, the Byzantine Empire was particularly plagued by their aggression. As a result of Pecheneg attacks, the Empire's military assets on the Lower Danube were almost completely destroyed.[262] These invasions were mainly aimed at plunder, as evidenced by the fact that the aggressor penetrated the Byzantium Balkan provinces evermore deeply. After 1036 the expeditions were halted for about one decade, which, as Paul Stephenson has hypothesized, may indicate the involvement of the steppe-dwellers in the trade of goods with the Empire's cities on the Danube.[263] These trade ties could have been maintained or renewed after the Pechenegs entered the Balkans. However, this trade probably did not match the scale and intensity of the trade in which the Pechenegs were involved in the mid-10th century.

4.4 Military

The Pechenegs, like most nomads, were known for their warlike character. Moreover, even in comparison to other steppe peoples, historical sources portray the Pechenegs as an ethnos distinguished by its bravery. Al-Masʿūdī expressed this belief very clearly when he wrote:

> The first of these nations has the name Bajna. The second is called Bajghird the next nation is called Bajnāk, and is the bravest of the four. The fourth is called Nūkardah.[264]

The bravery of the Pechenegs is also noted by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The scholarly emperor considered these nomads to pose a permanent threat both to the Byzantine Empire and to other neighbouring states and ethne, i.e., the Magyars, Rus', and Bulgars.[265] In his account of the history of the Pechenegs in the mid-11th century, when they were already suffering serious defeats in battles with the Rus' and the Uzes, John Skylitzes wrote:

262 Cf. Chapter 6 of the present book.
263 Stephenson 1999, 46–47, 52; 2000, 86.
264 al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 59; Pellat 1962, 177–178; Sprenger 1841, 445 (English translation has been slightly modified).
265 DAI, I–V (pp. 48–52); VIII (p. 58/9).

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> The Pecheneg people are Scythians pertaining to the so-called 'Royal Scyths'. They are numerous and no other people of the Scythians is able to withstand them alone.[266]

Finally, thanks to Anna Komnena's *Alexiad* we learn that:

> War is their [i.e., the Pechenegs' – A.P.] blood – they know how to arrange a phalanx.[267]

Military efficiency, as confirmed by these authors, became the main source of the political significance the Pechenegs enjoyed, especially in the 10th century. Let us take a closer look at their martial prowess.

As was the case with many other nomadic ethne, the social organization of the Pechenegs roughly mirrored that of a military organization.[268] In times of armed conflict, every man capable of bearing arms was expected to fight, and in the event of a particularly serious threat, women as well.[269] Individual tribes formed military units, called 'arrows' (*oq*). Their commanders were probably the tribal leaders, about whom we read in the Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio*.[270] We can also assume that the chief of the entire ethnos was elected from among this group. In the opinion of some researchers, the fact that almost the entire people was called to arms caused the armies of nomads to reach considerable size, which meant they were able to outnumber the enemy, this being one of the sources of the nomads' military success.[271] This assertion is not completely misguided, though it seems that another effect, resulting from the fact that the social and military organization of the steppe peoples were synonymous with one another, was more important: namely, the remarkable ease with which they could mobilize large numbers of fighters in a short period of time. The decisive factor would thus be not so much the number of

266 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 32–34); Wortley 2010, 426. 'Τὸ ἔθνος τῶν Πατζινάκων Σκυθικὸν ὑπάρχον, ἀπὸ τῶν λεγομένων βασιλείων Σκυθῶν, μέγα τέ ἐστι καὶ πολυάνθρωπον, πρὸς ὃ οὐδὲ ἓν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ Σκυθικὸν γένος ἀντιστῆναι δύναται'.

267 An.Kom., VII 3.7 (p. 211); Sewter 2009, 193. '[…] ἐκ φυσικῆς ἐπιστήμης πολεμεῖν εἰδότες καὶ κατὰ φάλαγγα ἵστασθαι […]'.

268 There is no separate native Turkic or Mongolian word for 'soldier'. The Turkic peoples referred to warriors with the word *er*, which also means 'man, person'. Sinor 1981, 134; Golden 2011a, 90–91.

269 An.Kom., VII 6.6 (pp. 219–220).Cf. Pletneva 1958, 196; Golden 2011a, 91–92.

270 DAI, XXXVII (p. 166/7).

271 Pletneva 1958, 196.

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warriors, but rather the speed with which they were assembled, a product of their almost constant readiness to take military action.[272]

The question of the Pechenegs' potential mobilization capabilities is particularly difficult to answer. Although we have data on the number of warriors in their military units, these should be considered fanciful.[273] Other estimates are more reliable if only because they are (sometimes by an order of magnitude) lower. It must be admitted, however, that we have no means of verifying these figures at our disposal, apart from the researcher's intuition. Nevertheless, it seems that the information contained in *The Book of Precious Gems* is worth closer consideration, as it allows us to indirectly estimate the strength of the Pecheneg army. We learn here that the army units expected to go on expeditions headed by the leader of the Magyars consisted of 20,000 horsemen.[274] Ibn Rusta seems to be describing the state of affairs in the latter half of the 9th century,[275] which is the period immediately preceding the Pechenegs' invasion of the Black Sea steppe. The latter assumption is of particular importance. If we take into consideration the fact that they defeated and drove away the Magyars, we can assume that they may well have had comparable forces at their disposal. This would mean that the size of their armies at the time of their arrival on the Black Sea steppe reached or slightly exceeded 20,000. An additional premise confirming the previous conclusion can be found in Chapter 8

272 Moszyński 1996, 31. Lev Gumilev (1997, 33) notes that in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE the population of the Xiongnu was about 300,000 people, while the population of the Chinese was almost 60 millions (sic!). In this situation, even taking into account the specificity of the internal organization of the nomads, the mobilization possibilities of the Han Empire were much greater. The Xiongnu, on the other hand, were able to prepare their forces for an effective attack much more quickly, which determined their success in battling this demographic colossus. Based on Martin Loewe's estimates, Thomas Barfield (1992, 49) presents more favourable demographic data for the nomads. The Xiongnu population was estimated to be around 1 million, while the Chinese were said to number around 54 million.

273 According to Skylitzes, the entire Pecheneg population, which under Tyrach crossed the borders of the Byzantine Empire in the middle of the 11th century, was said to number 800,000 people (ὁ Τυράχ [...] μετὰ πάντων τῶν Πατζινάκων [...] χιλλιον ὀκτακοσίων [...]). Io.Scyl., 458 (v. 44–45), Wortley 2010, 429 (an unauthorized revision by a translator to 80,000). This information was used by Omelian Pritsak (1975, 227) to estimate the size of the Pecheneg population; he obtained the rather fantastic number of 2.8 to 3 million people. The nomads are said to have had an army of 400,000 warriors at their disposal. The figure Pritsak provides is definitely inflated. Cf. Peter B. Golden's critical remarks (2011a, 108–109).

274 ibn Rusta: ibn Rusta, 33, 48–49; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 68 (cf. ibid. footnote 82: some Hungarian researchers have assumed that the number given by ibn Rusta constitutes 1/5 of all adult Magyars.). Zakhoder 1967, 48–49.

275 Marquart 1903, 24–26.

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of *De administrando imperio*. Constantine VII describes the unsuccessful diplomatic mission of the cleric Gabriel who was sent to Magyars as an imperial emissary. His mission was to persuade them to attack the Pechenegs in order to seize their territory and then settle in the immediate vicinity of the empire. Gabriel was unable to complete the task. The Magyars were not interested in even considering any attempt at attacking their eastern neighbours. Most interesting is the reason they presented to the emperor's envoy. They stated they were not able to fight the Pechenegs, because, among other reasons, 'their people [were] numerous' (λαὸς πολὺς).[276] This last phrase should be understood as proof of the Pechenegs' numerical superiority; otherwise the concerns of the Magyars would seem inexplicable. Interesting data can also be found in Masʿūdī's account of fighting at Walandar (*W.l.nd.r.*). The army of allied nomadic peoples was said to consist of 60,000 warriors. The author adds, however, that this was not the limit of their mobilization capabilities, as they were able to concentrate much greater forces, estimated at 100,000.[277] This information should be treated with the utmost caution. According to Marquart's revisions, the units of two, not four steppe ethne took part in the Battle of Walandar. This would mean that in determining their combined forces, the two numbers given by Masʿūdī should be distributed equally between the Pechenegs and the Magyars. Therefore, the mobilization capacity of each ethnos would range from 30,000 to 50,000 horsemen. It seems, however, that during invasions the maximum number of Pecheneg forces oscillated around the lower line, as some warriors had to remain in their homeland to guard their encampments, property and defenceless elements of the population.[278] Taking into account the above premises, we can assume that the Pechenegs were able to deploy a 20,000–30,000-man army.[279] However, these findings are subject to a number of reservations. First, they can only be safely applied to the Pechenegs' situation in the 10th century, when they were at the height of their political importance. Moreover, the number obtained should be regarded as an indicator of the demographic potential of this steppe people, which, if necessary, might

276 DAI, VIII (p. 56/7).

277 al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 60; Pellat 1962, 178.

278 Hansgerd Göckenjan, using the data on the Székelys community, assumes that about 1/3 of all warriors remained in such guarding roles. Göckenjan 1972, 105.

279 This number is quite impressive, although it seems that the most powerful nomadic peoples had larger forces at their disposal: the Xiongnu had 50–60,000 warriors (Gumilev 1997, 33), European Huns, together with foreign auxiliary troops – 60,000 (Dąbrowski 1975, 100), the Avars – 50,000 (Szymański 1979, 81), Batu Khan – 120,000 (Vernadsky 1953, 49. The researcher stresses, however, that its core field army, which could be used during operations in more distant areas, consisted of just over 50,000 warriors). Cf. Golden 2011a, 106–108.

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have been (but need not have been) realized for military purposes. Finally, an army of this type functioned according to the rules of an egalitarian society. Thanks to their ability to effect a general mobilization, they could assemble a major military force in a short period of time, but it could disintegrate equally quickly when the majority of warriors considered that the goal of the military action had been achieved. Engaging all or most of the ethnos for longer periods seems to have been possible only in extraordinary circumstances, in situations of extended and permanent crisis that threatened the very existence of the ethnos. The use of smaller units seems to be much more common, especially during foreign expeditions. Maintaining standing military contingents was possible and necessary once a nomadic community reached statehood.[280]

Apart from the ability to efficiently assemble large armies and outnumber weaker ethne, the tactics used by the Pechenegs were a crucial factor in their military successes. As in the case of most nomads, the speed and violence of the attack played a major role, as well as the extremely commonly used element of surprise.[281] A rapid attack and immediate retreat after accomplishing the objective guaranteed that the attacked state or people would not be able to gather sufficient forces to pursue the aggressor and retaliate. Moreover, the panic caused by an unexpected attack gave a chance to safely make off with booty.[282]

Speed of movement was ensured by the use of cavalry as the only type of unit in the army. If necessary, in order to reach a maximum speed during a march, supply trains were abandoned in favour of transporting supplies on pack animals.[283] The high level of endurance of steppe mounts gave them the potential to cover long distances without stops. It was enough for each warrior to lead a second saddled horse, so he could switch to it in order to let the other rest. Taking spare horses on military expeditions was a common practice among nomadic peoples. A Mongolian horseman went to war leading

280 Di Cosmo 2002, 179–183.

281 In his speech in honour of Emperor Alexios Komnenos (1081–1118), Bishop Theophylact of Ohrid compared the attack of the Pechenegs to a lightning strike. The attack was as troublesome, because of the losses that resulted, as it was quick, because of the attacker's sudden escape. Theoph.Achr., 221.

282 Kałużyński 1970, 9; Pletneva 1958, 198.

283 The occurrence of such a practice during the nomads' raiding expeditions seems to have been confirmed by Niketas Choniates' report on the Cuman invasion of the Balkan provinces of the Byzantine Empire. 'οἱ δὲ Σκύθαι κατὰ τὸν αὐτοῖς εἰωθότα τρόπον λείαν τὰ ἐν ποσὶ θέμενοι καὶ *ἀναθέμενοι τοῖς ἵπποις τὰ λάφυρα* νόστου ἐμνήσατο [The Scythians, according to their custom, collected the available booty, loaded their horses with their spoils, and turned homeward]'. Nic.Chon., 93 (v. 77–79). Cf. Magoulias 1984, 54.

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from one to nine additional horses.[284] According to Guillaume de Beauplan, each Tatar always led three mounts on a looting expedition.[285] Thanks to such procedures, the cavalry could travel at an astonishing speed.[286] During their journey, they made frequent but short stops – though after covering longer distances they usually rested for a few days.[287] Long forced marches usually led to losses from attrition, meaning only a small part of the army ultimately reached the designated destination, so such a grueling pace was imposed very rarely.[288]

In order to make better use of the element of surprise, an invasion was usually carried out when the opponent's main forces were away on a war expedition. This method was often utilized by the Pechenegs. This is how they inflicted a devastating defeat on the Magyars. Thanks to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, we know that they did the same during their invasions of the Rus'.[289] The information provided by the scholarly emperor is confirmed by *The Tale of the Bygone Years*, which describes the Pecheneg attack of 968, undertaken while the main forces of the Rus' were fighting in Bulgaria.[290]

Each military expedition was probably preceded by scouting, the aim of which was to examine the territory to be attacked and the forces of the opponent had stationed there. We know that some steppe peoples, especially the Mongols, mastered this aspect of the art of war.[291] All sorts of information was collected that would allow for a determination of the level of the enemy's military preparedness. They also examined the political situation. The Mongols were able to take advantage militarily and diplomatically of the existence of antagonistic groups within an enemy state.[292] In the case of the Pechenegs, preceding a military expedition with such sophisticated diplomatic manoeuvres seems rather unlikely due to the lack of a state apparatus capable of

284 Göckenjan 2000, 189.

285 Beauplan, 66.

286 Kałużyński 1983, 83. Dąbrowski (1975, 109) refers to information provided by Miklos Jankovich (1968, 223), according to which during the invasion of Hungary in 1241, the foreward guard of Batu was said to cover a distance of 480 km in three days, which would mean that the Mongolian formations were able to travel at a speed of up to 160 km per day. Information of this kind should be treated with great caution, even if it is close to the truth. Achieving such a pace is absolutely exceptional, even for nomads.

287 Beauplan claims that the Tatars stopped every hour for 15 minutes. Before entering the enemy territory, they rested for 2–3 days. Beauplan, 66.

288 Cf. Maroń 2001, 116–120. Based on modern examples, the author considers a number of myths concerning the mobility of nomadic armies.

289 DAI, II (pp. 48, 50), IV (pp. 50, 52).

290 PVL 1, AM 6476 (968), col. 65–67.

291 Olbricht, Pinks 1980, 185. Cf. Kałużyński 1983, 279; Göckenjan 2000, 191–193.

292 Kałużyński 1983, 274; Göckenjan 2000, 189–190.

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planning and directing such activities. However, more modest intelligence activities should be considered a possibility, including observation of military movements on the steppe and along their territory's borders, and taking prisoners who could serve as sources of information or guides during an invasion. In this context, the results of an analysis carried out by Joseph Németh and Karl H. Menges of the names of the Pecheneg *geneai* recorded in *De administrando imperio* seems very useful here. One of them, which according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus was part of the left wing, was called *Talmat* (full version of the ethnonym: *Borotalmat*).[293] According to a reconstruction carried out by these researchers, the ethnonym in its original version was *tolmač/talmač*, which means 'translator, dragoman'. The word allegedly comes from the Turkic *til*, which has the double meaning of 'language, speech' and 'spy'.[294] These findings lead to the thesis that the *Talmat-Tolmač* tribe could carry out intelligence activities during the Pechenegs' military expeditions. They probably also acted as the forward guard during a march. Information obtained through scouting was of key importance for the success of both military campaigns and simple looting raids. It also often determined whether a planned military undertaking would be successful.

It is generally believed that the season when nomads usually took offensive action was early autumn. This was supposedly determined by the condition of the combat mounts, which by that time had regained their full strength after a very harsh winter thanks to the abundance of spring and summer feed.[295] The time of year also guaranteed easy access to feed for horses. It cannot be ruled out that the purpose of the attack also played a role. If the goal was to obtain supplies, such as agricultural goods the nomads often lacked, then seizing it became possible only after the harvest, i.e., in early autumn. In the case of the Pechenegs, the direction and moment of an attack was probably also determined by the proximity and availability of the enemy's territory. Svetlana A. Pletneva claims that their invasions on the Rus' usually took place in the summer, when they were camping near the borders of the Kievan state.[296] However, military expeditions were also organized in winter. Two factors seem to have been decisive in initiating them. First, the winter cold made it easier for nomadic forces to enter areas that were not accessible at other times of the

293 DAI, XXXVII (pp. 166, 168).

294 Németh 1921–1925, 223; 1930, 30, 33; 1932, 50; Marquart 1929, 84–85; Menges 1944–45, 261–263. For a sceptical position: Vörös 2002, 624.

295 Olbricht, Pinks 1980, 53–54. Cf. Kałużyński 1983, 82.

296 Pletneva 1958, 200.

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year.[297] Second, shortages of provisions, which were more pronounced during the winter months, likewise forced them to undertake looting expeditions. In Skylitzes' chronicle we find two mentions concerning winter invasions by the Pechenegs of the Balkan provinces of Byzantium. In both cases, there existed a rather special circumstance, namely the freezing of the Danube in its lower course. As a result, the nomads had easy access to areas on the other side of the river.[298] A similar expedition in early autumn required a difficult crossing, the inconvenience of which became particularly acute during the retreat, when the nomads were burdened with the booty they had seized.[299]

The element of surprise, which gave the Pechenegs a tactical advantage over the enemy, was often achieved thanks to their use of ambushes. Their attacks on Rus' travellers making their way to Constantinople along the route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks' have already been mentioned. The final section of the route, due to the rapids on the Dnieper River, created excellent conditions to ambush the enemy. As we learn from Constantine Porphyrogenitus' account, the dugout canoes (called 'monoxylas') used to carry cargo on the river had to be ported in the area of the rapids. The Rus' would pull them ashore and carry them along with their cargo around the rapids and then continue their journey by water. It was at this moment when the Pechenegs would make a surprise attack.[300] Prince Sviatoslav lost his life in such an attack while returning to Rus' in 972 after an unsuccessful expedition to the Balkans.[301]

Apart from offensive tactics, which assumed the Pechenegs taking the initiative, they were also often forced to adopt a defensive approach. A number of campaigns undertaken against them by the Byzantine Empire in the latter half of the 11th century provide evidence that, when forced to defend themselves, they were also able to demonstrate significant military skills. The steppe-dwellers avoided open battles when the enemy had a tactical advantage. In times of danger, they were able to disperse quickly, making it difficult to combat them effectively. Delaying a decisive confrontation, they used hit-and-run tactics, defeating weaker enemy units that strayed from the main forces. Examples of such behaviour can be found in Anna Komnena's *Alexiad*. During the 1087 campaign, Alexios Komnenos crossed the Balkans and reached the area of the Dristra fortress, having travelled dangerously far

297 Cf. a report by Guillaume Beauplan on Tatar invasions in winter, the organization and course of which differ from those in summer. Beauplan, 65.

298 Io.Scyl., 399 (v. 3–5), 458 (v. 39–46); Wortley 2010, 376, 429; Io.Maur., 144–145.

299 This does not mean, of course, that steppe people were unable to cross a major river. Cf. Sinor 1961, 156–179; Golden 2011a, 113.

300 DAI, II (p. 50/1), IX (pp. 60–63).

301 PVL 1, AM 6480 (972), col. 74. Cf. chapter 5 of the present book.

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from his supply base in Thrace. The Pechenegs managed several times to intercept the Byzantine units sent to bring horse feed. The course of events that followed showed that once the nomads had achieved a tactical advantage over the enemy, they initiated combat. The battle took place near Dristra, and by the time it had ended, the Byzantines had suffered a crushing defeat, which Alexios Komnenos was fortunate to survive.[302] This battle was significant not only as a proof of the Pechenegs' ability to achieve and make use of tactical superiority, but also as an example of the combat methods they used in open battle. This is what we read in Book VII of the *Alexiad*:

> The Scythians also prepared for the battle [...]. So, after placing ambushes, binding together their ranks in close formation, making a sort of rampart from their covered wagons, they advanced en masse against the emperor and began skirmishing from the distance.[303]

The quote above quite unambiguously confirms that the Pechenegs used wagon forts during the battle. The effectiveness of these kinds of tactics is best evidenced by the outcome of the aforementioned battle. More information about the tactics used by the Pechenegs in open battles can be found in al-Mas'ūdī's account of a clash at the Greek stronghold Walandar. The Muslim writer does not mention the use of wagon forts by the allied forces; instead he points to the dominant role of the cavalry. It was said to be organized into squadrons of 1,000 horsemen each.[304] The battle began with an attack by the Pechenegs' light cavalry, which, without engaging in close combat, approached the enemy's line and carried out an archery attack.[305] This strike was carried out with the use of a small part of the nomadic force. The attack of the cavalry caused some confusion among the Greeks, who ultimately decided to engage the enemy. Light cavalry squadrons fired with their bows on the Byzantines as they attacked the main body of the nomad forces, which was not yet engaged in the fighting. These forces responded to the Byzantine army's attack first by

302 An.Kom., VII 2–3 (pp. 204–214); Sewter 2009, 187–196.

303 An.Kom., VII 3.7 (pp. 211–212); Sewter 2009, 193. 'Αλλὰ καὶ οἱ Σκύθαι σχῆμα πολέμου διατυπώσαντες [...] καὶ λόχους καθίσαντες καὶ τὰς τάξεις τοῖς τακτικοῖς δεσμήσαντες σφίγμασι καὶ καταπυργώσαντες οἱονεὶ ταῖς ἁρμαμάξαις τὸ στράτευμα ἱλαδὸν κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ἦεσαν καὶ ἠκροβολίζοντο πόρρωθεν'.

304 This would probably be the only example of a Pecheneg application of the decimal system in their army's organization, a system that was widespread among the Altaic peoples and beyond. Cf. Göckenjan 1980, 51–86.

305 We are most likely looking here at 'caracole tactics', commonly known on the steppe. Cf. May 2007, 72–74.

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shooting arrows, and then engaging in a direct confrontation, which halted the enemy's attack and routed their forces. The nomad warriors began a pursuit, during which the Greeks suffered considerable losses.[306]

The combat methods used by the Pechenegs in both battles were similar to those commonly utilized by other Turkic peoples. Teresa Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk states that in battle the Khazars also used light carriages tied together with ropes.[307] Attacking the enemy with just a part of one's forces, and thus the use of a tactical reserve, has been confirmed for both the Avars and the Mongols.[308] The nomads were also familiar with grouping cavalry into units thousands strong, and the existence of two types of cavalry, i.e., light and heavy.[309] Finally, their military tradition also included arranging armies into a two-wing formation.[310]

Both examples presented above do not confirm that the Pechenegs used a 'feigned escape' manoeuvre, a very popular tactical trick among steppe peoples, the aim of which was to lure the enemy into an ambush and attack with one's main forces after the enemy had loosened their formations during the course of pursuit.[311] This does not mean, of course, that the Pechenegs did not know about this kind of tactical manoeuvre. Paradoxically, however, the opposite situation was documented, when their forces were lured into a trap and annihilated by the Byzantines, who in the initial phase of the battle feigned their retreat. This happened during the Battle of Arcadiopolis (970), during Sviatoslav Igorevich's Balkan campaign.[312] Concluding our reflections on the tactics used by the Pechenegs in open battles, it should be noted that in the event of failure in their attacks, in order to avoid complete defeat, they usually opted for an immediate retreat.[313]

The only type of troops used in the Pecheneg army was that of cavalry. This by no means indicates that nomads never fought on foot. It is known that Avar horsemen would assume an infantry mode whenever they wanted to storm Byzantine fortresses.[314] Anna Komnena writes that Emperor Alexios was attacked by 'three Scythian infantrymen' during the battle of Dristra.[315]

306 al-Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies*, 62–63; Pellat 1962, 178–179. Cf. also Marquart 1903, 65.
307 Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1975, 440.
308 Szymański 1979, 88; Pohl 1988, 172.
309 Tryjarski 1975a, 557; Gumilev 1993, 67–68.
310 Tryjarski 1975a, 557; Marquart 1903, 65.
311 Kałużyński 1983, 273; Pohl 1988, 172; Maroń 2001, 54–56, 72; Golden 2011a, 95–96.
312 Io.Scyl., 289–290; Wortley 2010, 277.
313 See especially: Mich.Psell., VII 68 (p. 241); Sewter 1953, 242.
314 Szymański 1979, 88; Pohl 1988, 172 (The Avars did not like fighting this way). Cf. Sinor 1972, 172–173; Golden 2011a, 96.
315 An.Kom., VII 3.9 (p. 212); Sewter 2009, 194: 'πεζοὶ Σκύθαι τρεῖς'.

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Nevertheless, these examples indicate that the transformation of cavalry into infantry was only temporary and forced by circumstances. Some researchers consider the existence of two types of cavalry to have been common among nomadic ethne.[316] This view can only be supported if we assume that differences in social and economic status were reflected in the quality of one's weapons. The type of equipment used by a horseman would be not so much a consequence of military regulations, but rather of the natural processes of social stratification. According to experts on the subject, there was less a distinction in terms of equipment between heavy and light cavalry, as there was between the weaponry owned by the aristocracy and common members of the ethnos.[317]

Is an analogous division found among the Pechenegs? One can get such an impression based on al-Mas'ūdī's account of the Battle of Walandar, as well as from reports in Arab sources on the ostensible wealth of the Pechenegs, which was said to manifest itself also in the possession of a significant number of weapons.[318] Data from archaeological sources, however, suggests we exercise considerable caution here. No blatant manifestation of social position comparable to phenomena observed in the Cumans has been found among the Pechenegs. Neither the size of graves nor the abundance and richness of their inventory can be compared to the mounds of the Cuman khans. Contrary to the assertions of Pletneva,[319] it should be assumed that the Pechenegs were most likely a more egalitarian community. This of course does not exclude the existence of wealth and social differences among the Pechenegs. These were probably also reflected in differences in military equipment. However, their scale, especially in comparison with other steppe ethne, seems to have been visibly smaller.

Little is known about the way military formations were commanded during warfare. In order to ensure that the operation proceeded smoothly, the functions of chief commander were most likely entrusted to one of the tribal chiefs. Apart from the head of command, there was probably a group of minor chiefs who acted as commanders. We learn about their existence from the accounts of both Anna Komnena and John Skylitzes.[320] We do not know what kinds of authority the head of command possessed. Could he impose the death penalty

316 Gumilev 1993, 67–68.

317 Świętosławski 2006, 103–104.

318 Gardīzī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 165. Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. Marvazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250. Zakhoder 1967, 74.

319 Pletneva 1958, 197.

320 Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 64–66); Wortley 2010, 429–430. An.Kom., VII 4.4 (p. 216); Sewter 2009, 197.

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for failure to engage in combat, insubordination or desertion? In the Mongol army, where the principle of absolute obedience to the orders of the commander applied,[321] the chief commander of the Danube Bulgars also enjoyed a very broad range of powers.[322] However, clear differences between the two ethne mentioned above and the Pechenegs, especially in terms of their sociopolitical organization, prevent us from drawing a simple conclusion by means of analogy. On the contrary, much seems to indicate that the chief commander was not fully independent and had to take into account the opinions of minor chiefs in the decision-making process. What is more, even when commanding corps he could not afford to completely disregard the will of rank-and-file warriors. The incident recorded by Anna Komnena, mentioned earlier in this chapter, provides clear testimony to this fact. In that dispute over the fate of captives, the harsh pragmatism of the chiefs was justified. The prisoners-of-war offered a recruiting reserve that Alexios Komnenos could use to quickly rebuild his defeated army, which would give him an advantage in his fight with the Pechenegs.[323] This example cannot be treated as a demonstration of a general rule. In particular, it should not lead us to the conclusion that the function of chief commander was of little importance and was not associated with any real power. The prestige of this position was of great significance. If the head of command proved his military talents, he could gain a reputation that, despite the limitations on his powers, would provide him with significant authority to enforce his decisions.[324]

From information provided by Muslim writers, we learn that the Pechenegs used banners or pennants which they attached to their spears and would raise during battle.[325] Various iconographic sources also confirm the use of such combat signs by other steppe-dwellers. There is a representation of a horseman holding a spear with a piece of cloth attached to it on one of the vessels

321 di Carpine, IV 2 (p. 245), VI 2–3 (pp. 275–276). Cf. Kałużyński 1983, 262–263; Maroń 2001, 13.

322 Tryjarski 1975, 315. Cf. Sinor 1981, 135–137; Golden 2011a, 93–94 (both scholars cite many examples concerning other peoples of Inner Asia which managed to develop political organisms of the imperial type).

323 An.Komn., VII 4.4; 6.1 (pp. 216, 218); Sewter 2009, 197, 198–9.

324 It is significant that Kegenes owed his political significance to military successes in clashes with the Uzes. He must have enjoyed considerable influence, since Tyrach, the leader of the entire Pecheneg people, saw him as a threat to his power. Io.Scyl., 455; Wortley 2010, 427.

325 Gardizī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 165. Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. Marvazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250. Cf. Zakhoder 1967, 74.

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from the famous Treasure of Nagyszentmiklósz.[326] A large pennant (banner?) can also be seen on a rock face in Pliska. A piece of fabric is attached to the upper part of the shaft held by a warrior.[327] On one of the stone statues (*baby*) attributed to the Cumans, we find an engraving of a mounted warrior with a large pennant.[328] Finally, illustrations in the *Radziwiłł Manuscript*[329] show armed groups of nomads, probably Cumans, headed by a standard bearer holding a pennant. These banners probably served as field signs, indicating the commander's location during battle. Pletneva posits that when the Cumans had fully readied themselves to fight, they would raise their pennants.[330] It cannot be ruled out that the Pechenegs did the same. According to al-Gardizī, during battle they would also blow buffalo horns.[331] These sounds were probably used, like banners and pennants, to send signals.

The combat methods characteristic of steppe peoples were related to their weapons, the most common element of which was the bow. It is hard to imagine any nomadic military formation without this weapon, and its use by the Pechenegs is reported in both narrative accounts and archaeological finds. Suffice it to point again to the information we have on the battles at Walandar and on the Dristra, where the role of the bow as an offensive weapon was confirmed. Bone overlays found in grave inventories[332] allow us to assume that the Pechenegs used a form of composite bow. This bow was usually made of several types of materials,[333] and when it was in a resting position, its limbs were bent away from the direction in which one pulled the string. This allowed more potential energy to be accumulated, thanks to which a much longer range was achieved than with longbows, which were more common in Europe.[334] Archaeological findings indicate that Pecheneg arrowheads were mostly flat

326 Gyula 1974, fig. 147; Świętosławski 1996, 61.

327 Tryjarski 1975, 313 (fig. 10).

328 Świętosławski 1996, tab. IV, fig. 2.

329 Pletneva 1958, 198–199 (fig. 20–22), 202–203 (fig. 25, 27).

330 Pletneva 1958, 197.

331 Gardizī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 165. Al-Bakrī notes that the Pechenegs used trumpets instead of drums: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. Cf. Zakhoder 1967, 74.

332 Pletneva 1958, 156, 159; 1990, 46–48; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 18; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 87; Bisembaev 2003, 84. More generally: Sinor 1981, 139–140; Świętosławski 1996, 39–44; Loades 2016.

333 The precise species of materials varied according to region but all composite bows consisted of wood, horn, sinew and glue with either a bark or leather casing. Cf. Świętosławski 1996, 40; Loades 2016, 22–23.

334 The average range of the composite bow was about 350 meters. Świętosławski 1996, 41.

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and had a rhomboid shape.[335] Hungarian sources provide evidence of the use of poison arrows by these steppe-dwellers.[336]

The Pechenegs used many other weapons as well. Michael Psellos gives us a most intriguing piece of information:

> The only weapon they carry in their hands is the spear, their sole defensive armour.[337]

Apart from historical accounts, the fact that the Pechenegs used spears is also confirmed by archaeological sources. However, this type of weapon was not as widespread as one might think based on Psellos' account. Spearheads with a narrow, often polished leave and a massive bush have been found in Pecheneg graves.[338] Findings of this kind are, however, quite rare, which allows us to assume that only well-armed steppe warriors were equipped with pole weapons.[339]

When it comes to bladed weapons, the use of sabres is well documented.[340] Archaeological research tells us that these sabres were massive and quite wide and had slightly curved blades. They were no more than one metre in length. The handles were wooden, while the cross-guard was wooden or iron and

335 Pletneva 1981, 215; 1990, 44; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 16 (fig. 5), 18; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 87 (the most detailed information), 149 (fig. 20, the most common type fig. 11, 20, 22, 29, 33, 34); Bisembaev 2003, 83, 117 (fig. 15, 10); Świętosławski 2006, 89–93.

336 Chr.Hung., 348–349; Joh.Thur., I, 91.

337 Mich.Psell., VII 68 (p. 241); Sewter 1953, 242. '[…] δόρατα δὲ μόνον ἐναγκαλιζόμενοι, τοῦτο δὴ μόνον τὸ ὅπλον πρόβλημα ἔχουσιν'. An.Komn. VII 3.12 (p. 214); Sewter 2009, 196. The learned empress recalls her father being wounded by a spear wielded by a 'Scythian' (ie. Pecheneg). Muslim authors also talk about the spear as a weapon, though not the only one, of the Pechenegs. Gardizī: Martinez 1982, 152; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 165. Marvazī: Minorsky 1942, 33; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 250.

338 Pletneva 1958, 158 (fig. 4); 1981, 215; 1990, 44; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 88, 150 (fig. 21, il. 3–5); Bisembaev 2003, 85, 107 (fig. 5.4); 112 (fig. 10). The latter did not find any artefacts in the area of western Kazakhstan which could be considered typical spearheads. Only two iron cones were discovered, which could have been the lower ends of spears. For more in general about pole weapons among the nomads of the Great Steppe: Sinor 1981, 141; Świętosławski 1996, 35–37.

339 Pletneva 1958, 197; 1990, 83.

340 PVL 1, AM 6476 (968), col. 67. A Russian source describes the ceremony for establishing friendship between the Kiev governor Pretich and some unknown Pecheneg prince. The ceremony was accompanied by an exchange of gifts, during which the nomad presented a sabre, a horse and arrows to Pretich, while he received chainmail armour, a shield and a sword. This story shows that in the late 11th century (the time when the oldest Russian chronicles were written) the sabre was perceived as a typical element of a steppe warrior's equipment.

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elliptical in shape. This type of weapons is found relatively rarely in grave inventories. It was therefore a valuable and scarce item, and possibly, as in the case of spears, a weapon primarily of the elites.[341] In St. Bruno of Querfurt's *Letter to King Henry II* we also find a reference to swords, which were supposedly part of the Pechenegs' combat equipment.[342] This type of weapon was indeed known to the steppe people. In his encyclopaedia, the 11th-century writer Maḥmūd Kāšgarī often refers to the sword (*qilič*); judging from the frequent use of this word in that work, it must have been one of the most common melee weapons used by the Turks in that period.[343] However, for the period in question (10th–11th century) the occurrence of the sword is poorly attested archaeologically in the western part of the Great Steppe. And yet nomadic formations were armed with swords in antiquity and in the early Middle Ages, and it was still the standard weapon of the European Huns and Avars.[344] Nonetheless, swords dating back to a period later than the 7th century have been discovered in the European part of the Great Steppe very rarely. How can Bruno of Querfurt's account be explained? Witold Świętosławski rightly notes that the inhabitants of Europe, who came into contact with nomads from Asia, were rarely acquainted with the terms for their weapons.[345] Therefore, when describing them, they used terms typical of their own cultural milieu, noting only certain differences in the ones used by the steppe-dwellers. A good example of this is the characteristics of the sabres described by Giovanni da Pian del Carpine:

> As for the wealthy, they [Mongols – A.P.] have swords pointed at the end but sharp only on one side and somewhat curved [...].[346]

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341 Pletneva 1958, 159, 197; 1981, 215; 1990, 43; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 87–88; Bisembaev 2003, 84–85.

342 Bruno, 100. '[...] mille securibus, mille gladiis super nostram cervicem euaginatis, in frustra nos concidere minantur'.

343 Tryjarski 1993, 239–240; Coman 1998, 579, 598 (Coman provides just one meaning for the Cuman word *qylyč*, *qlyč*, namely 'a sword'); Ching-lung Chen 1984, 31 (also assumes that the word *keilin'ci* in Chinese sources refers to a sword, although the description seems to indicate that it may have been a sabre). It must be admitted, however, that in Turkic (at least in modern Turkish) this word can also mean a sabre or a backsword. See Antonowicz-Bauer, Dubiński 1983, 142, 344, 372, 420. We are therefore faced with the question to what extent the lexis of a particular Turkic language represented apparent technical differences between different types of bladed weapons.

344 Szymański 1979, 84; Dąbrowski 1975, 110; Świętosławski 1996, 35.

345 Świętosławski 1996, 32.

346 di Carpine, VI 4 (p. 276); Dawson 1955, 33. 'Divites autem habent gladios acutos in fine, ex una parte tantum incidentes, et aliquantulum curvos [...]'. A very similar description of a sabre can be found in Chinese diplomatic reports devoted to the 13th-century Mongols. According to one of these, the steppe-dwellers used 'swords' that were light, narrow and

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These remarks are similar to those of Bruno of Querfurt's. It is worth noting that the situation in which he came into contact with nomadic weapons was not conducive to insightful observation. Therefore, what were placed at the necks of Bruno and his companions must have been sabres and backswords. The latter are not as well attested in archaeological evidence, but, due to their straight blade they bear a closer resemblance to swords.[347]

The Pechenegs were also familiar with blunt weapons. St. Bruno of Querfurt's *Letter to King Henry II* contains information on axes,[348] which in this case is attested in archaeological records.[349] The steppe people in question used simple battle axes, though only occasionally. Among rank-and-file warriors, both the wand (*bulava*) and club (*buzdygan*) were common weapons.[350] Other weapons with which warriors were likely to be commonly equipped included combat knives,[351] as well as lassos, which were used for securing captives during battle.

An interesting, though somewhat unclear account of the use of another type of weapon is provided by Anna Komnena:

> It was his [Migidenos' – A.P.] son who in the war which broke out later charged fiercely against the Pechenegs […]. As he swept past, he was dragged by an iron grapple inside the circle of wagons by a Scythian woman […].[352]

The original name of the device in question is ἡ σιδηρᾶ ἅρπη. The translation by E.R.A. Sewter quoted above is acceptable, but it should be noted that the

curved. Olbricht, Pinks 1980, 72. In a second report we read that they used, like the Uygurs, curved sabres, which were light, nimble and very sharp. Their handles were small and narrow, so that they could be easily use for fencing. Olbricht, Pinks 1980, 174. Thomas of Split also mentions the curved swords (*falcati enses*) of the Mongols. Tho.Arch., 282.

347 Świętosławski 1996, 30–35.

348 Bruno, 100.

349 Pletneva 1958, 157 (fig. 3, 10); Bálint 1989, 73; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 21 (fig. 12); Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 88. For more in general on the subject of the blunt weapons used by the steppe peoples: Świętosławski 1996, 37–39.

350 Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 17 (fig. 6), 34 (fig. 19), 35.

351 Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 109; Bisembaev 2003, 85 (he records three long knives, one of which was as long as 18 cm. Their blades had a convex profile. The lack of a hilt-guard led the researcher to classify them as khanjalis)

352 An.Komn., VII 6.6 (pp. 219–220); Sewter 2009, 200. '[…] οὗ ὁ υἱὸς εἰς τὸν γεγονότα πόλεμον ὕστερον κατὰ τὸν … τόπον ὀξέως κατὰ τῶν Πατζινάκων ὁρμήσας καὶ παρασυρεὶς παρὰ γυναικὸς Σκυθίδος ἑάλω διὰ σιδηρᾶς ἅρπης εἴσω τῶν ἁμαξῶν ἑλκυσθείς'.

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word ἡ ἅρπη can also mean 'sickle'[353] or simply 'hook'.[354] Regardless of which of the proposed translations we consider more appropriate, it is quite difficult to explain what kind of weapon Anna Komnena is referring to here. Tryjarski assumes that the above-mentioned Migidenos' son could have been caught up in a lasso with an iron sickle at the end.[355] However, his later fate seems to indicate that this 'innovation' was not meant so much for capturing the enemy, as for inflicting death.[356] It also cannot be ruled out that the above account documented the use of some kind of improvized pole weapon, topped with a sickle or a hook. Giovanni da Pian del Carpine recalls that some heads of Mongolian spears were equipped with hooks that were used to pull the opponent off his horse.[357] However, such a weapon is poorly attested archaeologically. In addition, it has thus far been discovered only on the eastern stretches of the Great Steppe.[358] Therefore, the use of this kind of spear by a female 'Scythian' warrior seems unlikely.

Accounts on the use of armour are definitely the scarcest. On the basis of a passage from the chronicle of Michael Psellos, one could even conclude that the Pechenegs did not wear any armour at all:

> They wear no breastplates, put on no greaves, and no helmets protect their heads. They carry no shields of any kind whatsoever, neither the long sort like those traditionally borne by Argives, nor the round shield, nor do they gird on swords.[359]

This statement, however, comes from an author who despite his broad education was not an expert in the art of war. His account can therefore not be regarded as a conclusive basis for determining whether the Pechenegs wore armour. Rather, the most probably wore leather armour and gambesons, which have not survived to our times due to the low durability of the material from

353 Cf. Polish and Russian translation of the *Alexiad*: Liubarskii 1965, 216; Jurewicz 1972, 18.

354 This meaning is assumed by Dieter Reinsch. Reinsch 1996, 251.

355 Tryjarski 1975a, 564.

356 Migidenos' son was beheaded, and his head was later bought from the Pechenegs by Emperor Alexios Komnenos. An.Komn., VII 6.6 (p. 220); Sewter 2009, 200.

357 di Carpine, VI 9 (p. 278). 'Aliqui eorum lanceas habent, et in colo ferri lancee habent unum uncum, cum quo detrahunt hominem de sella si possunt.'

358 Świętosławski 1996, 36–37, tab. XIII (fig. 5–7, p. 95).

359 Mich.Psell., VII 68 (pp. 240–41); Sewter 1953, 242. '[…] ἀλλ' οὐδὲ θώρακας ἀμφιέννυνται, οὐδὲ κνημῖδας περίκεινται, οὐδ' εὐλόφοις τισὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς κατασφαλίζονται, ἀσπὶς δὲ αὐτοῖς οὐδ' ἡτισοῦν ἐν χερσὶν, οὔτ' ἐπιμήκης ὁποί ας δή φασι τὰς ἀργολικὰς, οὔτε περιφερὴς, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ξίφη περιζώννυνται, […]'.

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which they were made.[360] Archaeological research confirms that the nomads of Black Sea steppe used mail.[361] Items of this kind are mostly dated to the 12th century and later. Therefore, they could have been used by those Pechenegs who became part of the Cherni Klobuci tribal union. The origin of mail is not nomadic. Its invention is attributed today to the Celts.[362] In the Middle Ages, it was commonly used in Rus' and from there, probably found its way to the Black Sea steppe. It cannot be ruled out that the Pechenegs may have worn other types of protective garments that were more sophisticated than leather armour. At two burial sites in western Kazakhstan (at Bek-Bike and the Shalkar III cemetery), dated roughly to between the 8th and the 11th centuries, elements of lamellar armour were discovered, while another burial site (Karas I) contained the remains of chain mail.[363] The graves at those sites were definitely the resting places of members of the highest social strata.[364] Unfortunately, it is impossible to define their ethnic identity precisely. In the case of the earlier dating (8th century), it may have been the Pechenegs, though in the case of the later time period (10th–11th century) it was most likely the Uzes.[365] The elite nature of armour was the cause of its scarcity in the 10th and 11th centuries, which in turn resulted in their rarely being attested in archaeological data.[366]

Elements of the horse tack and riding equipment, however, are very commonly found in burial inventories. The most frequently discovered items include girth buckles, bits and stirrups.[367] The Pechenegs, like most nomads, probably used tall saddles with pommels and stirrups on flaps. The latter made it easier to get on the horse and made it possible to ride the horse over long distances. Moreover, with properly shaped pommels such a saddle allowed a horseman to shoot his bow to the rear and to strike his enemies with his sabre. Pecheneg stirrups had a characteristic round shape, looped stirrup leather,

360 Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 18.

361 Dąbrowska 1965, 140–141; Pletneva 1973, 95; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 111; Świętosławski 2006, 114–116. For more in general on the armour used by nomads: Świętosławski 1996, 16–29; Tryjarski 1984, 173–184.

362 Świętosławski 1996, 21.

363 Bisembaev 2003, 85–86.

364 In addition to plate armour, sabres were also found on both sites; in the burial sites at the Shalkar III cemetery, a silver mask was also discovered. Bisembaev 2003, 86.

365 Much like findings from the north-western Black Sea steppe. Dobroliubskii 1986, 50. The researcher mentions the presence of the remains of chainmail in nomadic burial sites dating back to late-9th to late-11th centuries. However, such a wide range of dates makes it difficult to determine the ethnic origin of the find. They could equally well be attributed to the Pechenegs, the Uzes or the Cumans.

366 The problem of armour was similar in the Cherni Klobuci: Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 111.

367 Pletneva 1958, 156; 1981, 214–215.

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and a semicircular footrest. Artefacts of this kind are present on the Black Sea steppe in the 10th century, while in the following century they practically cease to be found, which seems to indicate their close connection with the Pechenegs.[368] Equally typical of these nomads was their supposed use of a snaffle bit with rigid mouth pieces.[369] Girth buckles took a variety of shapes. The Pechenegs usually used oval ones slightly curved along the longer side.[370] Rarer finds include saddle decorations and strap separators. One burial inventory discovered in Crimea attributed to the Pechenegs contained strap dividers and fittings, clasps and appliqué work. All of these items were gold-plated and decorated.[371] The steppe people did not tend to use spurs. To direct their horses, they used leather whips, the handles of which are found in nomadic graves. These were usually made of bone, bronze, and iron. The Pechenegs' whips are known to have had cylindrical or ovate hilts that were made of bone and had a curved ending.[372]

The above description of the Pecheneg warriors' equipment seems to indicate that, despite some deficiencies, it was quite versatile. A well-armed Pecheneg warrior could effectively inflict losses on enemy forces both at a distance and in melee. Of course, the manner in which soldiers were armed varied greatly. Well-equipped horsemen were probably a minority, recruited from among the tribal elites. Judging from Arab sources, the Pechenegs could not complain about a lack of military equipment. Although this written information concerned the 9th century, there is nothing to indicate that this state of affairs changed after the Pechenegs moved onto the Black Sea steppe. The wide range of weapons in the steppe-dwellers' arsenal, as described by Muslim authors, stood out in comparison with those of neighbouring nomadic peoples; however, the weaponry of the heavily armed Byzantine horsemen was most likely superior in quality to that of a mounted steppe-dweller. A Pecheneg warrior's light, leather armour simply did not provide adequate protection in

368 Pletneva 1958, 156; 1981, 214; 1990, 50–51; Bálint 1989, 72; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 21 (fig. 11); Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 83–84; Bisembaev 2003, 81–82.

369 Pletneva 1958, 156; 1981, 215; 1990, 48–49; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 85–86; Bisembaev 2003, 82. For a critical stance: Spinei 2009, 294–295.

370 Pletneva 1981, 214–215; 1990, 51–52.

371 Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 22, 23 (fig. 13, 14); Chardaev 1991, 257, 338 (tab. 190). The Crimean archaeological site (Saraili-Kiyat) shows analogies with the findings from the Lower Dnieper (Kamenka, Kotovka, Staro-Shvedskoie, Gorozheno), and from the village of Gaievka. This last statement, based on coins featuring Constantine VIII (1025–1028), should be dated to the second quarter of the 11th century, which, given its location (Voronezh area, over the middle Don) means they should be assigned to the Uzes.

372 Pletneva 1981, 214–215.

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close combat, and for this reason above all they could not effectively fight a heavily armoured Byzantine soldier. It must be noted, however, considering the course of events at Walandar, that the outcome of such a confrontation was not always a foregone conclusion. Thanks to its lighter armour, the nomad army possessed a degree of mobility that was superior to that of either the Byzantine or Rus' cavalry. The high value of certain elements of the Pechenegs' military equipment is evidenced by the fact that it was gradually appropriated by the armies of neighbouring countries, mainly Kievan Rus'. The items which most eagerly adopted and widely disseminated were the nomads' bows and sabres. The latter became a permanently fixture in the Rus' armoury in the 12th century. Later, as an element of the process of adapting to the steppe peoples' military methods, these items began to be produced locally.[373] Some elements of the nomads' horse tack, especially their stirrups, which were important for proper use of a sabre, also enjoyed wide popularity.[374]

In order to fully appreciate the merits of the Pechenegs' military expertise and performance, we need to examine those aspects that go beyond the categories of tactics, weaponry, and organizational military structure, and thus those features that stemmed from their specific temperament and way of life. Michael Psellos addressed these issues quite eloquently:

> In one mass, close-packed and pell-mell, fortified by sheer desperation, they emit loud war-cries, and so fall upon their adversaries. If they succeed in pushing them back, they dash against them in solid blocks, like towers, pursuing and slaying without mercy.[375]

He continues:

> When they are thirsty, if they find water, either from spring or in the streams, they at once throw themselves down into it and gulp it up; if there is no water, each man dismounts from his horse, opens its veins with a knife, and drinks the blood. So they quench their thirst by substituting blood for water. After that they cut up the fattest of the horses, set fire to whatever wood they find ready to hand, and having slightly

373 Szymański 1973, 126–127.

374 Szymański 1973, 128.

375 Mich.Psell., VII 68 (p. 241); Sewter 1953, 242. '[…] ἀλλ' ὁμοῦ φύρδην συμπλακέντες ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῇ πρὸς τὸ ζῆν ἀπογνώσει ῥωσθέντες, μέγα τε ὀλολύζουσι καὶ οὕτω τοῖς ἀντιτεταγμένοις ἐμπίπτουσι κἂν μὲν ἀπώσωσιν, οἷα πύργοι ἐπιρραγέντες αὐτοὺς ἀφειδῶς ἑπόμενοι κατασφάττουσιν, […]'.

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> warmed the chopped limbs of the horse there on the spot, they gorge themselves on the meat, blood and all. The refreshment over, they hurry back to their primitive huts and lurk, like snakes in the deep gullies and precipitous cliffs which serve as their walls.[376]

Psellos' account is characterized by a clear tendency to exaggerate. The author sees cruelty, ferocity, primitivism, and a disregard for life as the sole source of the Pechenegs' military successes.[377] He does not refer to other aspects of their military; in fact, he appears to suggest that their military has no tactics or organizational structure, and that the only weapons it uses are spears. However, despite its biased nature, his account confirms that as steppe dwellers, the Pechenegs possessed a number of qualities that, together with their approach to the art of war, gave them an advantage in a confrontation with an opponent. Their courage, endurance and ruthlessness were products of the harsh living conditions on the steppe. The loss of herds, pastures or access to sources of water was tantamount to depriving them of the right to exist, so a potential rival interested in seizing these assets from them was considered be a mortal enemy that had to be destroyed at all costs. A similar state of affairs led to the creation of a rather specific 'nomadic' means of fighting, the strategic goal of which was the ruthless elimination of the enemy. Demonstrating benevolence after a victory was considered a dangerous move because it could have led to a revival of the enemy's military power and thus to a renewed threat.[378]

All of the factors described above made the Pechenegs a dangerous opponent, but their military was not without its flaws, revealed when the Pechenegs tried to conquer a well-fortified area. From *The Tale of the Bygone Years* we learn about a number of attempts to occupy Kiev and other fortified Rus' cities. However, all of them, from the first, dated 968, to the last, which took place in 1036, were unsuccessful.[379] An exception in this string of disasters was provided by al-Masʿūdī, who described the taking of the Byzantine fortress Walandar. It is also known that the invasions of the Pechenegs in the 1030s led to the

376 Mich.Psell., VII 68 (s. 241); Sewter 1953, 242–43. 'Δεῆσαν δὲ αὐτοῖς πιεῖν, εἰ μὲν ἐντύχοιεν ὕδασιν ἢ πηγαίοις ἢ ποταμίοις, λάπτουσιν αὐτίκα ἐπεισπεσόντες, εἰ δ' οὖν, τοῦ ἵππου ἕκαστος ἀποβὰς ἐξαιματοῦσι τούτους, σιδήρῳ τὰς φλέβας ἀναστομώσαντες, καὶ τὴν δίψαν οὕτως ἰῶνται, ὡς ὕδατι τῷ αἵματι χρώμενοι · εἶτα δὴ καὶ τὸν πιότατον τῶν ἵππων ἀνατεμόντες, καὶ τὴν εὑρημένην ἀνακαύσαντες ὕλην, αὐτοῦ που τὰ ἐντετμημένα τοῦ ἵππου μέλη βραχύ τι διαθερμάναντες μετὰ τοῦ λύθρου λαφύσσουσι, καὶ οὕτως ἑαυτοὺς ἀναλαβόντες ἐπὶ τὰς πρώτας ἴενται καλιάς · καὶ ἐμφωλεύουσιν ὥσπερ ὄφεις φάραγξι βαθείαις καὶ κρημνοῖς ἀποτόμοις, ὁποῖα τείχεσι χρώμενοι'.

377 Cf. footnote 5.

378 For a most striking example of such reasoning: Io.Scyl., 459; Wortley 2010, 430.

379 PVL 1, AM 6476 (968), col. 65–67; AM 6505 (997), col. 127–129; AM 6544 (1036), col. 150–151; Thietmar, VIII 32 (p. 530).

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destruction of the system of defences on the Danube border of Byzantium. A number of forts guarding this frontier were almost completely destroyed during this period. Anna Komnena writes that during the war of 1087–1091, the Pechenegs managed to take fortified Byzantine cities several times (e.g. Philippopolis).[380] We do not know what led to the successes of these assaults. Neither the *Alexiad* nor *Meadows of Gold* provides any information of value for determining how these strongholds were taken. Masʿūdī only states that the allied nomadic forces used the bodies of those who had fallen in previous fighting to scale the walls of Walandar.[381] This rather macabre information, however, is not deserving of consideration. It is possible that this success was achieved through the help of ethnically foreign experts in the art of siege.[382] We also cannot reject the possibility that these strongholds were taken by siege, but with the help of some ploy. According to an account dated 997 in *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, when faced with strong resistance by defenders, the Pechenegs were able to engage in advanced tactics. During their siege of Belgorod Kievski, they did not allow the inhabitants to leave the town, hoping that a lack of supplies would force them to surrender. However, this time, too, they were unsuccessful.[383] It should be stated that in general, large, well-stocked fortresses were rarely taken by the Pechenegs.

The weaknesses described above were exploited by their opponents, in particular the Kievan Rus'. We know that in the late 980s, when tensions between these two neighbours had reached their peak, Vladimir the Great began construction of a complex system of fortifications to protect the eastern and southern borders of his country from invasions by Pechenegs. According to information contained in *The Primary Russian Chronicle*, such strongholds were built on the Desna, Oster, Trubezh, Sula, and Stugna.[384] It is also possible that during the same period a significant part of the fortifications that came to be called the 'Serpent's Wall' were constructed or strengthened. They ran along

380 An.Komn., VII 6.4 (p. 219); Sewter 2009, 200.

381 An equally macabre, but much more reliable example can be found in Roger of Torre Maggiore's *Carmen miserabile*. The monk describes the conquest of the fortified village of Pereg, located between the cities of Arad and Csánad, during the Mongolian invasion in 1241. During the siege, first Hungarian prisoners-of-war, then Rus' and 'Ishmaelites' (possibly Muslims from Volga Bulgaria, Alania, Khwārazm and the Black Sea-Caspian steppe) stormed the village as human shields, followed by the Cumans, who were forced to fight alongside the Mongols. According to the Italian monk, the corpses of the dead were used to fill the moat surrounding Pereg. It is possible that an analogous method of siege warfare was used by the Pechenegs and the Magyars who supported them at Walandar.

382 Cf. Świętosławski 1996, 45–47.

383 PVL 1, AM 6505 (997), col. 127–129.

384 PVL 1, AM 6496 (988), col. 121.

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rivers (Stugna, Irpin', Teterev, Dnieper, Sula), which provided a kind of natural moat for them. The embankments were not particularly high (estimates range from 3.5–4 to 6–8 metres), but they were often preceded by a 12-metre-wide trench. There may have been a palisade along the top of the fortifications. Combined with a series of fortified settlements, they formed a rather strong defensive barrier against attacks by the Pechenegs, hindering access to Kiev's foreground and making it practically impossible to carry out a sudden attack on the capital city.[385]

Rus' chronicles and the majority of scholars assume that these fortifications were built in response to aggression by the Pechenegs. It is difficult to question such an interpretation, but it is worth remembering that the steppe people's raids recorded in chronicles, which clearly intensified in the late 980s, could have been a response to the incremental southward expansion of Rus' that began under the reign of Sviatoslav and then resumed under Vladimir. This clearly harmed the interests of the Pechenegs, disrupting their trade relations.[386] It is also worth noting that the construction of the Serpent's Wall and the accompanying fortified settlements resulted in a clear shift in the border of the Rus' state to the south, in some places by more than 100 km, i.e., deep into the area of the forest steppe, which was most likely considered by the Pechenegs to be their natural domain. Given this situation, their desire to reclaim these lost territories seems understandable. The Pechenegs, were unable to do so, but despite this fact, at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries they managed to threaten Kiev several times. Like most steppe peoples, they were able to carry out violent attacks designed to evoke terror. This ability made them highly dangerous and difficult to control, but apart from the

385 Bruno, 99. Cf. Kowalczyk 1969, 141–181; Kuchera 1987, [Rev. Kowalczyk 1989, 180–187: the researcher questions a number of Kuchera's findings, including the chronology of the construction of many fortifications, usually dated by the Ukrainian archaeologist to the reigns of Vladimir or Yaroslav the Wise]; Hensel 1987, 500–501; Szymanski 1973, 130–131; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 170–172; Morgunov 2010, 64–65. In the light of the above observations, Hansgerd Göckenjan proposed a hypothesis, which involves the existence of a system of fortifications on the border between Patzinacia and the Danube Bulgarian State, seems quite surprising. The basis for his interpretation is the information contained in Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio* on six abandoned fortresses (ἐρημόκαστρα) located at fords on the Dniester River. The etymological analysis of the forts' names carried out by Josef Németh is supposed to provide additional justification for this hypothesis. Németh's findings however have been challenged. Moreover, it is difficult to explain why the nomads would have created a system of fortifications along the border with Bulgaria. DAI, XXXVII 58–66 (p. 168/9). Marquart 1903, 196; Németh 1930, 33–34; Menges 1944–45, 271–273; Göckenjan 1972, 92–93.

386 Cf. second part of this chapter.

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destruction and havoc they caused, these attacks did not generally result in further-reaching consequences. This was due to the Pechenegs' specific political structure, which allowed them to act jointly against external threats, but prevented effective external expansion. Deprived of a clear political centre, the Pechenegs were not only incapable of conquering neighbouring territories, but also of effectively defending their own, as the example of their confrontation with Rus' clearly shows. The efficient fortification and colonization of Kiev's foreground by the Rurikids resulted, as noted earlier, in the nomads being deprived of a large portion of their lands, which they were ultimately unable to regain.

Owing to their military capabilities, the Pechenegs were able, as depicted by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, to threaten neighbouring states and ethne, which especially in the mid-10th century, was the source of their political significance. However, their military actions were usually instinctive, dictated by the need to defend their territory against aggression by other steppe ethne (e.g., the Uzes) or the desire for retaliation or the acquisition of wealth. In the early 11th century, the Pechenegs began to lose their military advantage. Once Byzantine and Rus' commanders developed an understanding of the merits of the steppe people's tactics, they began to adopt them themselves.[387] The role of an intermediary in this transfer of knowledge could have been played by auxiliary units comprised of nomads who had taken up service under the Rus' prince or the Byzantine *basileus*.[388] In order to adapt to fighting against the Pechenegs, cavalry units and some typical elements of the nomads' military equipment become commonplace among the Rus' forces in the last decades of the 10th century.[389] Thanks to these borrowings and the construction of fortifications, the rulers of Rus' managed initially to even the odds in battles with their troublesome neighbours, and with time, to take the initiative, which resulted in their final victory over the Pechenegs in 1036.[390]

4.5 The Pechenegs' Ethnic Identity and Value System

Ethnicity is a subjective and situational phenomenon. It involves the choice of identity, often made in conditions of a specific experience of contact with 'the other'. The creation of ethnic identity consists both in accepting values

387 Pletneva 1958, 198.
388 Cf. chapters 6 and 7 of the present book.
389 Szymański 1973, 130.
390 PVL 1, AM 6544 (1036), col. 150–151.

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considered by a particular community to be constitutive of it, and in rejecting values held by strangers as irrelevant or even threatening. We are therefore dealing with a process which determines the existence of a particular community. Identity is created and reconstructed in each new generation, which experts call 'ethnic practice'.[391] The transfer of identity from generation to generation results in the emergence of a tradition whose components can include customs, legal norms, religious beliefs, language, lifestyle, and elements of clothing and appearance.[392] The choice and meaning of these elements in the process of creating the identity of a given ethnos is highly subjective and depends on the specific historical situation and needs of the community in question. Certain elements of tradition can seem to lose their meaning in one generation, only to be revived in the next. Researchers of nomadic peoples talk about layers of tradition which 'remain in reserve', i.e., elements seemingly forgotten or excluded from everyday social practice, but which can suddenly be revived and once again become a basis of identity.[393]

While ethnicity is a subjective phenomenon and one based on individual and collective choices, it is not an arbitrary creation. It is founded on a set of cultural models and values which have been adopted or created by a particular community over the course of its history.[394] It is, of course, a truism to say that not all members of a particular ethnos identify with it to the same degree. In fact, quite often – especially when we obtain information from a description provided by an outside observer – we find certain collective traits being assigned to a given ethnic organism. Herodotus considered all those who remained under the authority of the Royal Scythians to be Scythians.[395] Sima Qian used a similar criterion in his characterization of the Xiongnu.[396] However, the example of European historian is much more significant, because he did so being aware of the radical cultural differences between various Scythian groups. Since the publication of Reinhard Wenskus' fundamental study *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, it has been understood that the concept of a uniform origin of all the individual members of a given community

391 Geary 2012, 32; Pohl 2008, 276–277; 2008a, 19–20.

392 Zientara 1985, 30–32; Geary 2012, 22–25; 2012a, 50.

393 The concept of *ideology 'in reserve'* was introduced by Philip Carl Salzman, who applies it to situations where an ideology outwardly accepted and professed by a particular community is not observed in everyday practice. According to him, this can be explained by the desire to maintain a cultural alternative that may be needed when the external conditions of the life of the community change. Salzman 1978, 618–637; 1980, 1–19.

394 Geary 2012, 31

395 Paroń 2007, 55–57.

396 Paroń 2012, 94.

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is entirely fictional, since in the course of history its composition has been complemented by ethnically and anthropologically diverse collectivities.[397] Given this situation, it is natural for degrees of identification to differ within groups. Most researchers emphasize the importance of an ethnic core, which is primarily responsible for storing and promoting the traditions that integrate the entire ethnos.[398] Alongside this elite group, there is always a majority who experience a more instinctive and situational sense of ethnicity. One must also assume the presence of peripheral groups, whose relations with a particular ethnos were based solely on violence, and who are therefore willing, if circumstances are favourable, to break away from the community. At its core are elites who express aristocratic tendencies towards the rest of the ethnos.[399] Similar phenomena are also visible in nomadic communities. An example of this is the division into 'white bone' and 'black bone', the latter applying to conquered tribes.[400]

In the centralized model described above, the formation of an ethnos is perceived as the incorporation of particular groups into a strong centre, represented by a charismatic leader or clan, who in order to justify their domination, create and nurture an orthodox version of the ethnic tradition. Ethnogenesis, however, can take a more complicated route, making it more difficult to describe and understand. An example of this is the origins of the Slavs, which usually lack a clear centre of integration. The creation of community traditions in this case was a dispersed process, difficult for one group to monopolize.[401]

It seems that in the case of the Pecheneg, the latter model provides a more accurate picture. The presence of three tribes called 'Kangar' (Κάγγαρ) with a segmented political structure was confirmed in *De administrando imperio*. Those who enjoyed the aforementioned designation were considered to be braver (ἀνδρειότεροι) and higher born (εὐγενέστεροι) than other Pecheneg tribes.[402] Elsewhere Constantine VII adds that in the earlier period of their

397 Wenskus 1961.

398 Geary 2012, 27; Wolfram 1990, 111–112; 1993, 27–39.

399 F.G. Schultheiss identified and defined two types of distinctiveness experienced by individual nations: national sentiment (*Nationalgefühl*), more common, but primary and instinctive, and national consciousness (*Nationalbewusstsein*), strongly developed, and based on a conscious understanding of what distinguishes a given (my) nation from others and of the source of this distinctiveness. This applies to only a small group and involves treating the factors determining its separateness as a common good. A very similar model, based on Stanisław Ossowski's sociology, is presented by Aleksander Gieysztor. (1972, 20–21). Cf. Geary 2012a, 46–47; Pohl 2008a, 19.

400 Moszyński 1996, 29.

401 Geary 2012a, 47–48.

402 DAI, XXXVII 68–71 (p. 170/1).

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history all Pechenegs were called 'Kangar'.[403] This group should therefore be seen as the core of the ethnos, which were integrated around the 'Braver'.[404] It is noteworthy, however, that John Skylitzes does not know anything about them in the mid-11th century. He traces the origins of the Pechenegs back to the Royal Scythians, thus replacing the steppe-dwellers' native genealogy with a Byzantine 'systematics' of barbaric ethne, based on the traditions of ancient Greek ethnography.[405] The tradition of which the 'Kangar' tribes were holding at that time may have either lost its importance or been significantly modified with the changes which affected the political organization of the Pechenegs during the century between the mid-10th and mid-11th centuries.[406] Skylitzes notes, however, that each of the 13 Pechenegs *geneai* had its own name, inherited from its ancestor and proto-parent.[407] This information clearly indicates that individual tribes nurtured their own genealogy, although it is difficult to say whether this was legendary in nature. Constantine Porphyrogenitus knows the names of the heads of eight Pechenegs tribes who were in charge of them at the time when the whole ethnos was expelled from its former homeland east of the Volga.[408] This event had taken place 55 years before the relevant chapters of *De administrando imperio* were written. This information had to come from the steppe people themselves, more specifically, from their elites, for whom a knowledge of these ancestors provided legitimacy for their social position.

Traditions concerning origins were thus cultivated within individual tribes. We do not know anything about an analogous phenomenon that would have concerned the whole ethnos. Meanwhile, legends about the common origin of a given people, including their genealogy or the genealogy of the family ruling over them, are common among steppe societies. From Herodotus we have several versions of the Scythian *origines*.[409] The Blue Turks (Tūjué) were said to have originated from the Ashina clan, which was said to be part of the Xiongnu people. The Ashina are said to have descended from a 10-year-old, mutilated prince (his feet were cut off), who was the sole survivor of a bloody raid that wiped out his village. He was rescued by a she-wolf, who fed the boy with meat, and when he grew up, had carnal relations with him. Their progeny

403 DAI, XXXVIII 20, 25 (p. 170/1).
404 Cf. Chapter 3 of the present book.
405 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 32–34); Wortley 2010, 426.
406 Cf. the first part of this chapter.
407 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 34–37); Wortley 2010, 426.
408 DAI, XXXVII 19–24 (p. 166/7).
409 Hdt., IV 5–16 (pp. 202–217).

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gave rise to the Turks.[410] One of the rulers of the Wusen, a people conquered by the Xiongnu, owed his salvation to a raven and a wolf, because these animals fed him as a child when he was hiding in the desert from his enemies.[411] According to *The Secret History of the Mongol*s, the progenitors of the Temujin family were *quua maral* (fallow doe) and *börte činō* (blue-grey wolf).[412] The Turkmens believe that their common ancestor was Oghuz Khan. In a series of legends describing his achievements, there are also stories about the progenitors of other Turkic ethne, including the Uyghurs, Kipchaks, and Karluks.[413]

This type of tradition most likely also existed among the Pechenegs, although due to a lack of data we do not know the details of its content. It was most likely cultivated mainly by individual tribes. Due to the necessity of frequent migration, a knowledge of the genealogy of one's ancestors and their achievements became one of the basic factors that made it possible to create and preserve one's identity. True or fictitious stories about the achievements of prominent ancestors also regulated the behaviour of contemporaries, constituting a kind of supplement to the common law.[414]

The memory of ancestors was also strengthened by certain aspects of religious beliefs, especially the cult of ancestors, which is a common phenomenon among nomads. According to ethnologists of religion, apart from the cults of Heaven, Earth, and various spirits of the steppe, it is one of the basic elements of the nomadic religious system.[415] Some Turkic ethne worshiped their ancestors as heroes, and thus as persons of merit to the entire community.[416] It is also known that in Inner Asia there was a custom of erecting stone statues in honour of outstanding leaders. This custom was carried over to the Black Sea steppe, where they are known as stone 'babas'.[417] These statues date back to the mid-11th century at the earliest, for which reason they are usually attributed

410 Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 5–6. Cf. Sinor 1982, 223–237; Tryjarski 1995, 60–63.

411 Watson 1961, 271–272. Cf. Sinor 1982, 237–240; Tryjarski 1995, 65–66.

412 Rachewiltz 2004, I, 1. Cf. Sinor 1982, 240–246.

413 Rašid ad-Din, I 2, 76–91; Abu-l-Gazi, 40–43.

414 Moszyński 1996, 27; Tryjarski 1993, 215, 226.

415 Szyjewski 2001, 426.

416 Gumilev 1993, 82.

417 The purpose of these stone statues is not entirely clear. Some researchers assume that they are not representations of prominent deceased persons, but of the enemies they killed. The latter function was supposed to dominate in the eastern part of the Great Steppe. Sometimes, however, these 'stone babas' are distinguished from stone balbals. The latter are supposed to represent enemies who were killed by the deceased, while the former are statues of prominent persons. Cf. Tryjarski 1991, 294–305.

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to the Cumans. Stone statues may have also been made by earlier nomadic peoples, including the Pechenegs.[418]

A spectacular manifestation of this people's distinctiveness was noted by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The emperor described the behaviour of a group of Pechenegs, which at the end of the 9th century separated from its ethnos:

> At the time when the Pechenegs were expelled from their country, some of them of their own will and personal decision stayed behind there and united with the so-called Uzes, and even to this day they live among them, and wear such distinguishing marks as separate them off and betray their origin and how it came about that they were split off from their own folk: for their tunics are short, reaching to the knee, and their sleeves are cut off at the shoulder, whereby, you see, they indicate that they have been cut off from their own folk and those of their race.[419]

This story, which probably came from the Pechenegs themselves, sounds rather anecdotal, but there is no reason to question its credibility. The manifestation of ethnic identity through elements of clothing is a widely confirmed phenomenon in the Eurasian steppe. Clothing was a form of everyday 'ethnic practice' because it allowed people to clearly differentiate themselves from their surroundings, and, as some apparel scholars claim, it may have served as a kind of identity card.[420] The presence of some sort of Pecheneg grouping within the Uze community, or rather on its periphery, is confirmed by a passage from Ahmad ibn Fadlan's *Risala*.[421] The manifestation of distinctiveness described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus is also a proof of a strong ethnic bond among the Pechenegs. Nomads who were detached from their native ethnos must have taken pride in their origins, since they decided to build their identity on

418 Pletneva 1974; 1990a, 100; Daszkiewicz, Tryjarski 1982, 195–196; Tryjarski 1991, 300; Waklinow 1984, 158 (the author attributes to the Pechenegs two stone figures depicting a woman and a man, discovered in Bulgaria, near the village of Endzhe, near Shumen); Fiedler 2013, 253–260.

419 DAI, XXXVII 50–57 (p. 168). '[…] κατὰ τὸν καιρόν, ὅν οἱ Πατζιναικῖται ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας χώρας ἐξεδιώχθησαν, θελήσει τινς ἐξ αὐτῶν καὶ οἰκείᾳ γνώμῃ ἐναπέμειναν ἐκεῖσε, καὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις Οὔζοις συνῴκησαν, καὶ μέχρι τοῦ νῦν εἰσιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, ἔχοντες τοιαῦτα γνωρίσματα, ὥστε διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ νοεῖσθαι, τίνες τε ἦσαν, καὶ πῶς αὐτοὺς ἀποσπασθῆναι τῶν ἰδίων συνέβη· τὰ γὰρ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν εἰσιν κόντουρα μέχρι γονάτων καὶ τὰ μανίκια ἀπὸ τῶν βραχιόνων ἀποκεκομμένα, ὡς δῆθεν ἐκ τούτου δεικνύντες, ὅτι ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ ὁμοφύλων ἀπεκόπησαν'.

420 Szymański 1979, 95; Iatsenko 2012, 111–112.

421 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 212–215; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 33; Kovalevskii 1956, 130; Frye 2005, 42.

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it in their new living situation and demonstrate the fact they were separated from their native community.

The above-mentioned fragment of *De administrando imperio* also points to the circumstances in which one's sense of ethnic identity manifests itself: contact with outsiders. In such a situation, elements of one's native culture – lifestyle, common law, beliefs, and language – which in everyday conditions might go unnoticed, suddenly become the centre of a community's identity. The relations between nomads and agricultural communities, it can be assumed, created the necessary conditions for the occurrence of a radical experience of otherness, which was probably accompanied by an intensive re-evaluation of one's own identity.

Differences in lifestyles were certainly the first to be noticed. A nomadic lifestyle was, from the perspective of settled communities, the main feature that distinguished and defined the world of steppe people; for the latter it was the main facet of their identity and a guarantee of independence. A nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life, which involved travelling across vast spaces, allowed a nomad to experience unrestricted freedom. The type of economy that was the main source of income for the steppe people did not require much physical effort and was not very absorbing. According to some researchers, such a state of affairs could have been the cause of the 'laziness' often observed by outsiders in nomads.[422] What is certain, however, is that this way of life, as a source of true freedom, filled them with pride. Compared to this existence, the life of a farmer bound to the land, and forced to perform unchanging and difficult labour, not only did not appeal to nomads, but even filled them with contempt, as an existence worthy only of a slave. Those who cultivated the land had to break their backs and struggle with everyday hardships which, in contrast to the sweet idleness of nomads, seemed to embody the agrarian struggle for survival. The steppe dwellers also considered their way of life to be fully in harmony with nature, as they did not alter the space in which they lived. The Mongols used to say that their land had skin (*körösü*), as opposed to the ploughed, or even 'skinned' land of farmers (*körösü-ugei*).[423] Agrarian societies seemed to have the exact opposite view, according to which only by cultivating the land was a special bond formed between it and people.[424] The natural state desired by steppe people implied that the land belonged to nobody because nobody worked on it. This sometimes led agricultural communities to occupy pastures, abandoned for some time by nomads, which in turn led to

422 Moszyński 1996, 26–27; Tryjarski 1975a, 528.

423 Jagchid, Hayer 1979, 310; Jagchid, Symons 1989, 175–176.

424 Nowicka 2001, 327; Modzelewski 2004, 259–263.

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conflicts.[425] A nomadic way of life was also perceived as a combination of a state of temporary idleness, or outright laziness, with a state of military activity. The latter was supposedly impossible for hard-working farmers, which made them practically defenceless.

The set of beliefs outlined above must have given birth to aristocratic tendencies among the nomads. They believed that settled communities, deprived of freedom and unable to defend it, were by nature predestined to recognize the power of the nomads and satisfy their needs.[426] This way of thinking is observed e.g., in the Royal Scythians[427] and the Avars.[428] It seems, however, that the stereotype of the farmer-slave may have existed in a more or less developed form in the mentality of most nomadic ethne, among which the Pechenegs would have been no exception. We can recall the account by John Skylitzes describing the efforts of Constantine IX Monomachos to ensure that the members of the Pechenegs' ethnos who settled in the *thema* of Bulgaria would engage in agricultural activity. However, at the first opportunity that arose, they organized a rebellion and abandoned the farming they had been forced to perform.[429] The Byzantine ruler did not realize that from the perspective of a nomadic society, the abandonment of the old way of life and living off the land was understood as a type of degradation, a transition from being a free man to a state of slavery. As a consequence, it had to lead to a loss of identity.

The nomadic way of life was important for yet another reason, one that was realized by more perceptive leaders of the steppe people and by keener outside observers. Nomadism was a guarantee of the independence of nomadic political organisms, especially when they entered into relations with powerful agricultural states. Only as mobile riders could they stand up to much richer and more numerous settlements. Herodotus understood this fact,[430] and so did his Chinese counterpart Sima Qian. The latter recognized the Chinese renegade Zhonghang Yue as the one who discovered the importance of nomadism and a culture based on it as a guarantee of the Xiongnu's independence from China.[431] The Turkic statesman Tonyukuk, an advisor to Bilge Khan (716–734),

425 Noonan 1992, 303.
426 Moszyński 1996, 30, 32; Kałużyński 1970, 9.
427 Herodotus states that the Royal Scythians considered the rest of the Scythians to be their slaves, including the Scythian-tillers and Scythian-farmers. Hdt., IV 20 (p. 220).
428 Szymański 1979, 42; Pohl 1988, 112–117.
429 Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 79–83), 461 (v. 27–42); Wortley 2010, 430, 431.
430 Hdt., IV 46 (p. 246), 120–144 (pp. 320–344).
431 Watson 1961, 170–175. Cf. Paroń 2012, 89–93.

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was aware of this fact as well.[432] Genghis Khan himself was said to claim that the Mongols would be lost if they started living in clay houses.[433] These examples seem to explain the stubbornness with which the Pechenegs tried to preserve their former way of life after they entered the Balkans.

Nomads, including the Pechenegs, strongly emphasized their independence when interacting with other peoples. Constantine Porphyrogenitus confirms that when Pechenegs performed services for the emperor or the inhabitants of Kherson, they always demanded payment for the completed task as free people.[434] Similarly, an emperor's envoy sent to them on a mission had to pay remuneration for their help by offering gifts to the Pechenegs' representatives and their families.[435] On such occasions, the Pechenegs were said to demand such rare luxury items that Constantine was prompted to associate them with unrestrained greed. This tendency, though often described in a caricatured manner, seems to indicate the rather ambivalent attitude of the steppe-dwellers towards settled peoples. Yet, while they despised their way of life and occupations, nomads often desired or were simply forced to obtain the goods produced by farmers. External symbols of wealth, luxury, and comfort that were abundant in highly developed civilizations, fascinated the steppe-dwellers. This admiration unleashed a desire to acquire these riches, ones extremely scarce in the harsh conditions of steppe life, by any means available. This desire is reflected in written sources providing the earliest historically documented contacts between settled communities and nomads.

Chinese chronicles speak of the great thirst for wealth found in the Xiongnu, as well as among the Blue Turks, who were equally dangerous to the Middle Kingdom. We learn from these sources that both ethne particularly valued silk.[436] In characterizing the European Huns, Ammianus Marcellinus claimed that 'they burn with an infinite thirst for gold.'[437] The history of the Eastern Roman Empire's relations with Attila's empire confirms this account. Under the peace agreement of 447, the court in Constantinople had to pledge to pay

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432 Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 172–173.

433 Jagchid, Hayer 1979, 19–20.

434 DAI, VI (p. 52/3).

435 DAI, VII 8–17 (p. 54/5). Cf. Paroń 2007a, 107–108.

436 At their peak, the Han people sent the Xiongnu nearly 95,000 metres of silk a year; in 553–572 the Zhou Dynasty sent the rulers of the Blue Turks 100,000 bales of silk a year; The Uyghurs received 500,000 pieces of silk a year from the Tang. These are examples of the most spectacular tributes. Cf. Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 395–396; Dąbrowski 1975, 34; Barfield 1992, 47, 64–67, 133, 154; Gumilev 1997, 33; 1992, 23; 1993, 146.

437 Amm.Marc., XXXI 2.11 (p. 386).

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the Huns an annual tribute of 2,100 pounds of gold.[438] The Avars managed to extort literally tons of gold from the Byzantine Empire.[439] Less powerful steppe ethne were not able to loot such huge amounts of gold, but they also eagerly coerced generous tribute. The Pechenegs were said to be 'shameless in their demands for generous gifts.'[440]

The above-mentioned tendencies among nomads were eagerly exploited by neighbouring states, which offered 'generous gifts' as a means for using the steppe peoples to achieve their political aims. Byzantine diplomacy in particular excelled in this. It is sufficient to recall the instructions of Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who emphasized that in order to win and maintain the friendship of the Pechenegs, a diplomatic agent had to be sent to them each year with sufficient gifts.[441] From Rus' writings, we also know that the Pechenegs who participated in Igor's expedition against the Greeks were neutralized by Byzantine diplomats with the help of expensive gifts.[442] There are many other similar examples concerning other ethne as well.

As noted earlier, the value of the 'gifts' received, or even coerced, by the Pechenegs did not match the great wealth of goods supplied to the steppe empires. The Xiongnu, Huns, Blue Turks, and Avars all received regular tributes, which may have been presented by the diplomats of neighbouring states as voluntary gifts or even manifestations of being in good graces. To stop paying, however, posed the risk of invasion, which the steppe people's leaders did not hide. It is also worth remembering that such a transfer of goods was possible within the framework of the special mutual relationship that existed between a steppe empire and a rich agricultural one.[443] The Pechenegs did not constitute an imperial organism, so the 'gifts' they received were probably not as lavish and could have arrived in an irregular manner. Ahmad ibn Fadlan, an emissary of caliph al-Muqtadir (908–932) to the ruler of the Volga-Kama Bulgars, provides interesting comparative material. Before he reached the main destination of his diplomatic journey, he visited several elders of the Uzes. During a visit to Atrak, one of the elders, the Abbasid envoy presented

438 Prisc. 9.3 (p. 236). The amount mentioned in the treaty is the equivalent of 688 kg of gold. Cf. Hardt 2003, 97.

439 At the peak of this practice, the Avars were said to receive a tribute of 200,000 solidi, that is, over 900 kg of gold. According to various estimates, they were supposed to have coerced from Byzantium between 13.7 and 36.3 tons of gold. Pohl 1988, 178–185, 205–215; Hardt 2003, 99; 2004, 42–44, 175; Polek 2007, 243.

440 DAI, VII 9–10 (p. 54/5).

441 DAI, I 16–24 (p. 48/9).

442 PVL 1, AM 9452 (944), col. 45–46.

443 Barfield 2001, 10–41; Paroń 2013, 224–233.

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gifts from the ambassador Nadhir al-Harami, who had sent 50 dinars, three mitqals of musk, [pieces of] red leather, two bolts of cloth from Merv, from which were cut two jackets, as well as a pair of boots of red leather, a coat of brocade, and five coats of silk. Al-Harami gave Atrak's wife a head shawl and a ring.[444] These gifts were expensive, but far from the riches regularly received by the rulers of steppe empires. The fact that the donor was an ambassador and not the caliph himself does not change anything, because the gifts of al-Muqtadir to the 'king' of the Bulgars were not that glamorous either.[445] The level of the material culture and political significance of the Pechenegs and the Uzes were most likely similar, so we can assume that the gifts received from their political partners were comparable in terms of both the types of goods (expensive fabrics, perfumes, precious metals) and their value.[446]

The gift-giving described by ibn Fadlan was part of a diplomatic rite which communicated the nature of the relations between political partners. For the steppe people, this was not just another opportunity to acquire wealth. Such an interpretation, though partly true, omits certain features of the steppe people's mentality, including that of the Pechenegs. Receiving expensive gifts was for them a matter of prestige; it meant they were being treated as free people. In diplomatic terms, for individual tribal chiefs who were reluctant to recognize any power above themselves, this meant that a potential ally was treating them as sovereign leaders. The goods acquired could also be redistributed within a particular community, which further strengthened the authority of its chief.

Giving gifts to the Pechenegs was most likely a means used by diplomats of all states who wanted to establish political ties with them or ensure their neutrality, although extant written sources seem to indicate that such a method was used mainly by the Byzantine Empire. Its diplomats were convinced that they were fully capable of exploiting the barbaric peoples' fascination with external manifestations of the empire's power.[447] Indeed, the potential of Byzantium and its arsenal of methods for influencing neighbouring peoples developed over the centuries seem to justify this belief. Frequent complaints

444 Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 210; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 29; Kovalevskii 1956, 129; Frye 2005, 40. Some authors of translation of ibn Fadlan believe that in the case of the red leather, he simply meant leather which had been tanned (ibn Fadlan, 211; Kmietowicz, Lewicki 1985, 96).

445 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 216–218; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 41; Kovalevskii 1956, 132; Frye 2005, 45. Ahmad ibn Fadlan writes about gifts consisting of fragrances, robes, and pearls.

446 Cf. DAI, VI (p. 52/3).

447 For more in general on Byzantine diplomacy, its rituals and Byzantine imperial doctrine: Treitinger 1938; Dölger 1953; Ohnsorge 1958; Ostrogorski 1973, 119–141; Shepard 1985, 233–293; 1992, 41–71; Obolensky 1994, 1–22; Udal'tsova 1989, 241–275.

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by Byzantine authors about 'unfaithful and wicked' barbarians seem to indicate, however, that they sometimes remained resistant to the persuasion of imperial diplomats. Perhaps they were willing to accept the goods and concessions offered to them, but did not always behave as Constantinople wished. This observation also applies to the Pechenegs, as proved by the history of prince Sviatoslav Igorevich. The Steppe people did not agree to allow his safe return to Rus', despite the efforts of Emperor John I Tzimiskes.[448]

The political behaviour of the Pechenegs, which harmed the interests of neighbouring countries, was bound to cause irritation among their political elites, which in turn was reflected in written sources. Works by Byzantine authors, as well as Rus' chronicles,[449] convey the theme of the godless nomad, i.e., an individual deprived of any religious sense that would constitute the basis for a coherent ethical system for governing the behaviour of individuals and communities. In fact, the looting and cruelty attributed to steppe people easily led one to the conclusion that they were committing such acts because they were not held back by a deity like the Christian God who would punish them for their crimes. This kind of reasoning is particularly visible in Michael Psellos' characterization of the Pechenegs:

> Taken in the mass, this is a nation to be feared, and a treacherous one. Treaties of friendship exercise no restraining influence over these barbarians, and even oaths sworn over their sacrifices are not respected, for they reverence no deity at all, not to speak of God. To them all things are the result of chance, and death they believe to be the end of everything. For these reasons they make peace with great alacrity and then, when they find it necessary to resort to war, they at once violate the terms of their treaty. If you conquer them in war, they invoke a second treaty of friendship; if it is they who win the combat, they massacre some of their captives and hold a magnificent sale of the rest. For the rich prisoners they fix the price high, and if they fail to get ransom, they kill them.[450]

A few decades earlier, John Mauropous described the Pechenegs in a similar way. The metropolitan of Euchaita presented them as wild barbarians deprived of any basis for social order in the form of religion, law or knowledge.[451] The

448 Io.Scyl., 309–310; Wortley 2010, 293; Io.Zon., XVII 3 (p. 535); Trapp 1986, 40. Cf. also Chapter 5 of the present book.

449 Chekin 1992, 9–28.

450 Mich.Psell., VII 69 (pp. 241–242); Sewter 1953, 243.

451 Io.Maur., 144 (§ 9, 196[1]).

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motif of godlessness and the complete anomie of nomads, quite common in Byzantine historiography, often substituted for reflection on the principles governing steppe societies. Scholars reduced them to the status of hordes of wild animals, capable only of incomprehensible aggression. They were ignorant of any kind of order built on the foundations of law, custom and religion. This kind of perception has, of course, devastating consequences for our knowledge of nomadic customs. In the case of the Pechenegs, scientific reflection on the institutions fundamental to any community is almost entirely absent.

Meanwhile, customs and the laws derived from them are probably the most important elements of the traditions and identity of a particular ethnos. They are strongly connected with native beliefs and mythology, which are inseparable. All the categories listed here are of fundamental significance for the existence and continuation of an ethnic community. Reinhard Wenskus sees a people, above all, as a community sharing a common law. Adherence to it and to past beliefs allows one's identity to be preserved even if the group united by these customs loses the knowledge of its mother tongue as a result of remaining in a foreign environment.[452] The great importance of customs was also understood by the Turkic peoples. It suffices to recall here an aphorism noted by the famous 11th-century encyclopaedist Mahmūd of Kashgar: 'The realm may be left behind but not custom' (ēl qalir törü qalmās).[453]

The word *törü* in Kāšgarī's quotation means 'custom', but also 'law', which seems to correspond closely to the Old Greek word *nomos* (νόμος) and Latin *mos*. There is no indication, therefore, that nomadic communities were in principle anomic. This is also confirmed by information from less biased observers who stayed among the nomads. John of Pian de Carpini notes that 'Tatars' are honest towards each other, rarely resort to violence in their interactions, and in times of hunger share food and help one another. The Franciscan also emphasized the good manners of their women and very severe punishment for adultery.[454] It is worth noting, however, Carpini's comment that these righteous customs of the 'Tatars' apply only within their community. The use of violence, killing, robbery or trickery was purportedly allowed when it was directed against strangers.[455] A similar state of affairs, one which likewise assumed the observance of strict norms of coexistence within the native ethnos, but loosened them in relations with the outside world, could also have been found in the Pechenegs. The Byzantines most likely experienced this,

452 Wenskus 1961, 38–44; Zientara 1985, 31; Modzelewski 2004, 66, 67.
453 Al-Kāšgarī, I, 264. Cf. Tryjarski 1993, 215.
454 di Carpine, IV 2–3 (pp. 245–246).
455 di Carpine, III 8 (p. 240).

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especially since the latter half of the 11th century, which must have influenced their perception of these steppe-dwellers. They did not understand the world of nomads, which does not change the fact that the acts of aggression directed by the Pechenegs against the empire when they were officially part of it could not have been assessed positively by Byzantine historians and rhetoricians.[456]

Traditional beliefs, whose connection with common law has been indicated earlier, were also a very important tool for maintaining the distinctness of nomadic communities in their contacts with the outside world. The Danube Bulgars clearly contrasted their identity to that of the Byzantines based on religious differences. In an inscription dating back to the 820s attributed to the Khan Presian I, the Bulgars were contrasted with Christians, who were rightly considered synonymous with 'subjects of the empire'.[457] This opposition reveals a logic of identification, according to which religious affiliation defines social and political affiliation. A Mongol whom William of Rubruck met on his journey to Karakorum seems to have shared a similar way of thinking. He was a subject of Sartach, son of Batu Khan. He was said to object categorically to calling his master a Christian, since according to him, Sartach was a Mongol.[458]

In the case of such a strong link between ethnic identity and religion, conversion, especially when it was carried out by representatives of the elite, was frowned upon. From the account of Ahmad ibn Fadlan, we learn that one of the Uze leaders had to remain faithful to the religion of his ancestors, although he wanted to convert to Islam. This was because his subjects threatened that after his conversion he would not be allowed to remain their leader.[459]

Much more dramatic events are said to have affected the Pechenegs. Al-Bakrī reports that in the Hijri year 400 they were to receive a Muslim prisoner-of-war familiar with sharia law who would spread the faith of Mohammed. After some time, when the number of believers had reached 12,000, a conflict broke out between them and the Pechenegs who remained faithful to the religion of their fathers; the latter, despite a twofold advantage, suffered a defeat and were killed.[460]

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456 Cf. Chapter 7 of the present book.

457 PI, no. 14, p. 165; Petkov 2008, 13. A fragment of the inscription reads as follows: 'When someone speaks true, god sees. And when someone lies, god sees as well. The Bulgars did many favours for the Christians, and the Christians forgot them. But god sees.' The inscription comes from southern Thrace and dates back to the year 837.

458 Rubruc, XVI 5 (p. 205). 'Nolite dicere quod dominus noster sit christianus. Non est christianus, sed Moal'.

459 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 206/207; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 25–26; Kovalevskii 1956, 127; Frye 2005, 37.

460 Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59–60; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222–223. Cf. Zakhoder 1967, 75–76.

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In the early 11th century, the Pecheneg nomads would thus became orthodox Muslims, with a scholar, expert on sharia law, and teacher of the Quran permanently residing among them. This information seems quite mysterious and should be treated with great caution, for no other source confirms its truthfulness. Some scholars, however, do consider it to be credible. According to them, the rapid spread of Islamization among nomads is supposed to prove this.[461] Indeed, as the aforementioned remark by ibn Fadlan shows, the followers of the new religion, especially those who tried to impose their faith on the rest of their tribe, had to expect to encounter strong resistance. However, it is difficult not to notice in al-Bakrī's account a narrative schema, which reflects elements of the ideology of the jihad (e.g., the twofold advantage of the disbelievers over the Muslims, who nevertheless win).[462] The date of the conversion of the Pechenegs raises doubts as well.[463] It is difficult to explain why they would have adopted Islam in the 11th century, when their territories were so far from the most important Muslim political and cultural centres.[464] Finally, it should be noted that mass conversion is not confirmed by archaeological sources either. According to this data, between the 9th and 11th centuries the vast majority of steppe-dwellers continued with their native burial practices.[465] One should therefore maintain a certain degree of scepticism about the possibility of the conversion of the whole ethnos, while recognizing as probable the existence of a small group of Islamic neophytes who appeared among the Pechenegs as

461 Tryjarski 1972, 146; 1975a, 589–590.

462 DeWeese 1994, 79; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 223 (n. 14).

463 Josef Marquardt had already expressed doubts in this matter and proposed to correct the date for conversion of the Pechenegs to Hijri year 300 (912/13 CE). Marquardt 1903, 72–74. The German scholar refers to al-Masudi's account, according to which among the Pechenegs who invaded the Byzantine fortress of Walandar (probably Debeltos) around 934, there were said to be many followers of Islam. al-Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 58–64; Pellat 1962, 177–179. Cf. also Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222 (n. 12).

464 Cf. Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222–223 (n. 13). The authors try to explain the late conversion of the Pechenegs as being rooted in politics. The steppe dwellers are said to have become the object of a Muslim missionary campaign, the aim of which was to gain an ally in the escalating struggle of the Arab world with Byzantium under Basil II and Rus' under Vladimir, a newly converted Christian. The tension between the Rus' and the Pechenegs, which reached its peak at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries, resulted in an increase in the influence of Islam among the Pechenegs. The mission of Bruno of Querfurt is also said to have served primarily political purposes, i.e., appeasing the Pechenegs and incorporating them into the alliance of Christian rulers (cf. below). This hypothesis, however, has very little foundation in historical sources.

465 During the excavations in a mixed Pecheneg and Uz cemetery, located not far from the former Khazar stronghold of Sarkel, only one (female) grave showed elements of a Muslim funeral rite (including the orientation of the deceased's head towards Mecca, the arrangement of the body on the side, and the lack of inventory). Pletneva 1990, 11–13.

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early as the 9th century and continued to remain with them.[466] Most of the conversions probably took place in the Transvolga region, where the existence of strong Islamic influences is confirmed by the account of ibn Fadlan. It also shows what this 'faith' actually looked like among some steppe people who less insightful observers might have considered to be orthodox Muslims. During his journey through the land of the Uzes, the Abbasid diplomat noted:

> I have heard them [i.e., Uzes – A.P.] declare: 'There is no god but God! Muhammad is God's emissary.' But it was a way of ingratiating themselves with the Muslims passing through their lands and not out of conviction.[467]

Elsewhere ibn Fadlan mentions an incident he considered offensive, i.e., when he was asked by one of the nomads whether Allah had a wife.[468]

Upon entering the Black Sea steppe, the Pechenegs found themselves surrounded by Christian states or states that were soon to be Christianized. This provided the nomads with an opportunity for intensive contact with the followers of yet another monotheistic religion. They most likely first came into contact with Christianity through their relations with the Byzantines. This could have occurred in individual contacts during the trading of goods, and in official contacts during the conclusion of political agreements, when each party affirmed their pledge to respect the agreement by invoking its own customary sources.[469] Until the mid-11th century, however, we know nothing about any organized attempts by Constantinople to Christianize nomads, nor about any individual endeavors of this type. The first Christian mission among the Pechenegs confirmed by written sources is the expedition of Bruno of Querfurt, dating back to 1008.[470] The missionary briefly described his stay

466 Some researchers assume that followers of Islam were present among the Pechenegs as late as the mid-12th century. This is based on the account of an Arab traveller, Abu Hamid al-Garnati, who, during his stay in Hungary, said he came into contact with two groups of Muslims. One of them, described by him as the Maghreb, is sometimes identified as the Pechenegs. Bol'shakov, Mogait 1971, 38–39, 75 (n. 112); Uzelac 2010, 70. However, this identification is questionable. Cf. Lewicki 1937, 111–114; Berend 2001, 66.

467 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 202/203; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 20; Kovalevskii 1956, 125; Frye 2005, 33–34.

468 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 202/203; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 21–22; Kovalevskii 1956, 126; Frye 2005, 34.

469 DAI, VIII 15–18 (pp. 54–57).

470 The most recent studies on St. Bruno of Querfurt's expedition to the Pechenegs: Tyszkiewicz 2009, 71–89, 95, 101–103; Dudek 2010, 241–254; Paroń 2013a, 161–178; Kollinger 2013, 187–202. Cf. also considerations in Chapter 6 of the present book.

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with 'the most cruel of all pagans' in his *Letter to King Henry II*.[471] He writes about the conversion of 30 souls, which should be interpreted as a symbolic number communicating his having planted a sufficient number of seeds to ensure the independent existence of a Christian community,[472] whose further existence and development would require the consecration of a bishop, which soon followed. The new bishop was most likely an individual connected with Kievan Rus'.[473] Bruno also noted that he was able to bring about peace between the Pechenegs and Vladimir the Great. The latter sent one of his sons to the nomads as a hostage in order to secure the new agreement. Later, close contacts between Sviatopolk I and the Pechenegs suggest that he was the one sent. We do not know anything further about the lives of this bishop and his Pecheneg neophytes. It is thus difficult to say whether this new Christian community survived. Bruno claimed that he visited three out of four 'parts' of the Pecheneg lands, while 'emissaries of the better [ones]'[474] came to see him from the last one, which would indicate that the seeds of the Gospel had been widely sown. New conflicts between the Rus' and the Pechenegs and the gradual retreat of the nomads from the Black Sea steppe, however, must have weakened the contacts between the new bishop and Kiev, and destroyed the fruits of Bruno's missionary work.

A mass conversion of the Pechenegs was recorded in the mid-11th century by Byzantine sources. The first to be baptized (together with his followers) was Kegenes, an ambitious leader who was in conflict with bulk of the ethnos. The ceremony took place on the banks of the Danube and was performed by Euthymios, a pious monk. Soon afterwards, the main group of the Pechenegs moved onto the territory of the empire. In their case, only members of the elite, including Tyrach, the leader of the whole ethnos, were considered 'worthy of baptism'.[475] There is no surviving information on the conversion of the remaining Pechenegs. The smooth and peaceful course of the ceremony and the large number of neophytes baptized have been seen by contemporaries as a great success for the Church and the Byzantine Empire.[476] A comparison with the seemingly modest results of St. Bruno's mission seems to strengthen

471 Bruno, 99–101.

472 Paroń 2013a, 177. Cf. Rosik 2010, 209–210 (interesting comparative data).

473 Cf. Poppe 1968, 188–189; 1999, 228; 2008, 56.

474 Bruno, 100 (v. 6–7). '[…] tres partes circuiuimus, quartam non tetigimus, de qua meliorum nuntii ad nos venerunt […]'. Cf. Chapter 6.

475 Io.Scyl., 457 (v. 10–14), 459 (v. 80–85); Wortley 2010, 428, 430; Io.Zon., XVII 26 (p. 643); Trapp 1986, 107. Cf. Ivanov 2003, 226–227; 2008, 328.

476 Io.Maur., 143–144 (§ 7–8), 145 (§ 12–13). Cf. Malamut 1995, 121; Ivanov 2007, 255–256. See also Chapter 7 of the present book.

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this impression. However, the history of the later relationship between St. Bruno and the Byzantine Empire shows that Constantine Monomachos did not achieve very much. This baptism did not bring about any significant spiritual or mental change in the Pechenegs.[477] The enthusiasm of some witnesses to this event should therefore be contrasted with the bitter realism of the statements of later authors, in particular, Michael Attaleiates and Michael Psellos. Their disappointment resulted mainly from the fact that the baptism did not change the attitude of nomads towards the empire in any significant way. Although they formally became a part of the empire, there was no increase in the degree of their loyalty to the empire.[478] The lack of data indicating any pastoral activity among the new subjects of the empire, however, is puzzling. Meanwhile, it would seem that the metropolis of Dristra, with its five suffragan dioceses, would have had sufficient potential to successfully Christianize the Pechenegs.

The passivity of the Byzantine Church could have been exploited by dualist sects operating in the Balkans. Vasili Vasilievskii notes seeing the early influences of Manicheanism among the Pechenegs. The peoples living north of the Aral Sea, including the Pechenegs, were said to have fallen under the influence of followers of Mani's teachings, who were numerous and active in Transoxiana.[479] It is much more likely that the Pechenegs were influenced by the Paulicians. This seems to be proven by their close political contacts with representatives of this religious community. As Dimitri Obolensky has rightly assumed, the arrival of the Pechenegs in the Balkans may have aroused the interest of the heretical Paulicians, who saw them as potential converts.[480] Although we know nothing about the Paulicians' missions among the nomads, political cooperation between them, facilitated by the anti-Byzantine attitudes shared by both communities, has been confirmed. Mentions of Paulician leaders marrying the daughters of prominent Pechenegs date back to the 1070s and 1080s, and these marriages strengthened the alliance that had been formed between the two groups.[481] It is very possible that the nomadic mentality was

477 Cf. Tryjarski 1975a, 592–593.

478 Mich.Att., 54/55. Cf. Ivanov 2003, 230.

479 Vasil'evskii 1908, 40–41.

480 Obolensky 1948, 192–193.

481 Lekas, who was Greek and a follower of Paulicianism, was married to a Pecheneg woman. In 1078 he agitated people living near Serdica and Niš to rebel against the Byzantine Empire. Mich.Att., 550/1; Scyl.Cont., 184. In 1084, a rebellion was sparked by Traulos, another Paulician, was also associated with the Pechenegs. An.Kom., VI 4.2–4 (p. 174); VI 14.2 (pp. 199–200); Sewter 2009, 158–159, 182–183. Cf. Obolensky 1948, 189–192 and Chapter 7 of the present book.

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well suited to the Paulicians' activism, which made them a militant community. The teachings of Bogomilism, which involved asceticism and withdrawal from life, probably seemed much less attractive, although the Pechenegs could have also been exposed to this sect in the Balkans.[482] This applies especially to those groups of nomads who, after the battle of Lebounion, settled in the Moglena region, east of Vardar, where followers of this latter heretical sect were relatively numerous.[483]

Byzantine authors, however, considered the Pechenegs adamant pagans or completely godless people, which is clearly indicated by the passage by Michael Psellos quoted earlier. In regard to nomadic peoples, the latter view was very widespread and probably stemmed from a misunderstanding of the nature of their beliefs or a deliberate disregard for them.[484] However, despite clear revulsion towards the Pechenegs expressed by Byzantine writers in the 11th and 12th centuries, we must admit that their harsh diagnosis reflected to a good extent the actual state of affairs. The majority of nomads probably held to their native Turkic beliefs.[485] Other religions they encountered in the course of their history may have influenced them, but they probably did not cause the Pechenegs to abandoned their original beliefs in any important respects. Traditional beliefs continued to shape the Pecheneg system of values to a significant degree.

The fact that we know so little about these beliefs is truly unfortunate. The scarcity of narrative sources is not compensated for by archaeological material. For this reason, we are able to recreate only a general outline of the Pechenegs' funeral rites and put forward a few elementary hypotheses concerning their

482 On Bogomilism in general: Obolensky 1948; 1994b, 259–280; Angelov 1961. On the Manichean heresy: Runciman 1947; Schmaus 1951, 271–299.

483 Io.Zon., XVIII 23 (p. 741); Trapp 1986, 167. Cf. Obolensky 1948, 193.

484 Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus on the Huns: '[…] nullius religionis vel superstitionis reverentia aliquando districti […]'. Amm.Marc., XXXI 2.11 (p. 386). A less radical stance towards the Mongols, although in many respects a related one, is taken by Giovanni da Pian del Carpine. Although they are not completely godless, because they believe in one God, who is the creator of all that is visible and invisible, as well as the giver of punishment and rewards (*bonarum*), they do not worship him in any way (di Carpine, III 2 (p. 236)). They know nothing about eternal condemnation or eternal life, and imagine the afterlife as a visible world. (di Carpine, III 9 (p. 240)).

485 According to al-Bakrī, before they converted to Islam, the Pechenegs practiced the religion of 'magi' (*maǧūs*). Bakrī: Kunik, Rozen 1878, 59; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222. Cf. Zakhoder 1967, 75. Some researchers consider this information to be a cause for considering the influence of old Iranian religions, mainly Mazdaism and Zoroastrianism, among the Pechenegs. Tryarski 1972, 140, 142–146; 1975a, 583, 585–589. The word used by al-Bakrī may mean simply an ethnic, pagan religion, or most probably the native beliefs of steppe dwellers. See Shcherbak 1959, 372; Lewicki 1954, 164; Göckenjan, Zimonyi 2001, 222 (n. 11).

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ideas about the afterlife. There are also very few traces of their symbolic culture – a phenomenon that is extremely important for understanding the religiosity of any community. Due to this lack of sources, the Pechenegs' native beliefs have thus far been merely inferred, mainly on the basis of comparative analyses. It has been assumed, for example, that as a Eurasian nomadic people, they must have shared a number of religious traditions typical of the Great Steppe. On that basis, the Pechenegs are attributed the practice of shamanism.[486] However, this religious phenomenon tends to be understood in different ways. Some researchers treat it as a set of specific religious phenomena and common practices, such as rites of passage, the cult of ancestors, mysticism and sacrifice. Shamanism perceived in this way may, in various forms, play a role in various religious systems, including monotheistic ones. This view is contrasted with another, according to which shamanism is a separate religious system that originated in Siberia, from where it spread to the steppe.[487] Both positions only seem to be distant from one another. The belief that ecstatic experience – perceived to be a fundamental element of the shamanic complex – was universal is compatible with the conviction that such experiences have had a fundamental and constitutive importance for the beliefs of some communities, including the peoples of the steppe.[488]

Shamanism is based on a characteristic cosmology, which assumes the division of the cosmos into two or three vertically arranged zones (heaven and earth, or heaven, earth and the underworld), which can communicate with one another.[489] This kind of 'journey' to heaven or underground is accomplished by going into a trance. Shamanism accepts the existence of special relationships between animals and zoomorphic spirits. It also applies a specific 'eschatology', according to which one's departure from this world, as well as falling ill, is always due to supernatural factors, i.e., the influence of evil spirits. The dead do not end up in heaven or hell, since the original beliefs of the Altai peoples did not involve the notion of punishment for the crimes committed and rewards for the good deeds performed during the course of one's lifetime. Only under the influence of monotheistic religions, mainly Christianity, did the beliefs of some inhabitants of Inner Asia incorporate a conviction that good people were headed 'up above', while bad people – 'down below'.[490]

486 Macartney 1929, 354; Tryjarski 1972, 140–141; 1975a, 584–585; Spinei 2003, 107; 2009, 274.
487 Szyjewski 2001, 288.
488 Roux 1984, 61–98; 1988, 519; Eliade 1971, 504, 507; Szyjewski 2001, 288–289; 2005, 5–6.
489 Roux 1984, 62; Szyjewski 2005, 153–184.
490 Kałużyński 1968, 131; 1983, 96; Roux 1984, 254, 258; 1963, 106 (the researcher stresses that all the terms used by the Turks to describe hell were of foreign origin); Tryjarski 1991, 62–64, 72–74.

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The central figure in this religious system is the shaman, who, according to Mircea Eliade, 'plays an essential role in the defense of the psychic integrity of the community'.[491] He has the ability to heal by bringing the soul of a sick person abducted by demons back. The shaman also fights black magic, and works as a mediator between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead, gods and demons.[492]

As the nomads imagined it, life after death was an almost exact copy of life on Earth. After passing to the other side, they would have to, as they did earlier, graze their herds, fight, rob, and love.[493] A common cultural phenomenon among steppe peoples was therefore equipping the deceased with what they would need in the underworld. This custom was reflected in the contents of funeral inventories discovered by archaeologists. A funeral ceremony included the sacrifice of a horse, the remains of which were often found in burials attributed to the Pechenegs.[494] Comparative data seems to suggest that the animal was supposed to be a guide and a means of transport by means of which the soul of the deceased would be transported to the afterlife.[495] In the funeral inventories of the Pechenegs there have also been found elements of horse tack (most often stirrups and bits), weapons (arrowheads, bow covers, spearheads, and sabres – the latter relatively rarely), parts of belts (including buckles and ornaments, most often made of bronze), knives, flints, and mutton bones, which may constitute a trace of the funeral banquet, and occasionally clay pottery, usually made without the use of a potter's wheel.[496] These modest relics were probably the deceased's equipment for the afterlife.

The concept of the lack of punishment in the afterlife for crimes committed on earth, commonly attributed to steppe peoples, is an interesting issue. Such a state of affairs would indicate that the ethical aspect of the native beliefs of the Altai peoples was noticeably limited or completely non-existent. They

491 Eliade 1988, 19.

492 Eliade 1988, 20.

493 Roux 1963, 107; 1988, 518, 527–528; Tryjarski 1991, 70–71; 195–197, 199, 201.

494 The remains of horses were usually placed next to the human body on a step elevated for that purpose or at the bottom of the grave. The skeleton of the animal, usually incomplete (usually the head with anterior and posterior limbs, cut off at the second or third joint, and then arranged in anatomical order), was sometimes saddled and bridled. Pletneva 1958, 153–155; 1981, 218; Dobroliubskii 1986, 49–50; Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 94–95; Atavin 2008, 84–86 (in the material collected by Atavin, horse remains were found in more than half of the burials attributed to the Pechenegs).

495 ibn Fadlan 208/209; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 27–28; Kovalevskii 1956, 128; Frye 2005, 39. ibn Fadlan described the sacrifice of the dead man's horse on which, according to the Uzes, he was to reach 'paradise'.

496 Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 94–95, Atavin 2008, 82–84, 85.

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probably lacked the notion of sin and of an inevitable divine punishment that threatens believers for committing sinful acts. Both of these notions, in contrast, were central to the monotheistic religions (Christianity, Islam) professed by the authors who described the Pechenegs. Observing their political behaviour, which these writers saw as often being expressed in unfounded breaches of faith, pillaging and cruelty, they may have assumed that steppe dwellers were committing them because they were not restrained by a deity, who, like the Christian God, would punish them for their crimes. The matter, however, appears to be more complex. The notion of sin and an ethical system built upon it probably replaced a variety of taboos that previously functioned in Pecheneg communities, and which prescribed certain behaviours as elements of their relations with numerous spirits and deities. Within the framework of such a religious outlook, all misfortunes, whether affecting an individual or the whole community, were interpreted not as a punishment for offences committed against one's neighbour, but as a punishment for offending one of the supernatural beings by violating a taboo concerning them.[497] Such a means of reasoning among the steppe people was noticed by the keener observers who came into contact with them. John of Pian de Carpini attributes to the Mongols a number of religiously motivated prohibitions, the violation of which was punished very severely for fear of the consequences.[498]

Their attitude towards other people is a separate issue. Pecheneg communities, like those of other nomads, were not anomic. Customs and legal rules regulated relations within the community; however, outside of it, as we noted above, these rules were more loosely applied. Violence in relations with outsiders was not strictly forbidden. Likewise, plunder, severely punished when it was committed against members of the native community, was admissible or even accepted when the victim was a stranger.[499] Of course, for practical reasons, the most extreme behaviours were limited. Attacking and robbing every newcomer who appeared in areas controlled by the Pechenegs would have led to a disruption of trade, which, as we have seen, was of considerable importance to the steppe peoples. The case of Bruno of Querfurt, whose first contact with the Pechenegs seemed to confirm all the flaws attributed to nomads, also

497 Kałużyński 1968, 141; 1986, 108–118.

498 According to Carpine it was a sin (*peccatum*) among the Mongols to put a dagger into fire or to touch fire with a dagger, lean on a whip while driving a horse, touch arrows with a whip, catch or kill young birds, spill milk on the ground, urinate in a yurt, spit out a bite of food received during a feast, or step on the entrance to the yurt. The last three offences were punishable by death. di Carpine, III 7 (pp. 239–240).

499 Kamocki 2003, 62. For the Bedouins and the Kyrgyz, property acquired through robbery was a source of pride.

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seems significant. However, when they became aware of his intentions, they allowed him to stay and did not interfere in Bruno's missionary activities, or at least we do not know anything about this.[500] Personal relationships established through trade or diplomatic contacts were also a mitigating factor in the behaviour of the steppe dwellers towards people from outside their community. A stranger could become the 'comrade' (*drug*') of a particular Pecheneg, as shown by the account in *The Primary Russian Chronicle* of the friendship between an unnamed Pecheneg and Pretich, the governor of Prince Sviatoslav Igorevich.[501] Close relations of some kind also connected the nomad Tatranes and Emperor Alexios I Komnenos. The Pecheneg switched sides numerous times; he would support the Byzantines, then return to his kindred people. Nevertheless, he seems to have always remained personally loyal to the Emperor.[502] The relations between the Khersonites and the Pechenegs who traded with them, as described in the second part of this chapter, were also conducive to making personal contacts based on friendship.

Such ties were valuable not only for political or economic reasons; sometimes they simply saved lives, as the story of the Byzantine commander Katakalon Kekaumenos, who later became the duke of Antioch, clearly shows.[503] He was seriously injured in the battle of Diakene (1049), which was lost by the Byzantine forces.[504] As he lay on the battlefield, unconscious from the loss of blood, he was recognized by Koulinos (Goulinos), most probably the son of the famous Kegenes. The Pechenegs seated Katakalon on his horse, took him to a tent and cared for his wound, thanks to which the Byzantine commander survived.[505] It seems that Koulinos was not motivated solely by a desire to receive a ransom. The Katakalon's injuries were so serious that hopes for his survival, and thus any gratification, were in fact low. If Koulinos was only interested in profit, he would have probably simply killed and robbed the wounded commander.[506]

500 Bruno, 100–101.

501 PVL 1, AM 6476 (968), col. 66–67.

502 An.Kom., VII 10.1 (pp. 229–230); Sewter 2009, 210.

503 He was not the author of *Strategikon*. Shepard 1992, 171–181.

504 According to John Skylitzes: 'one [of his wounds] laid bare his skull [...] from the peak to the eyebrow, another on the collar had cut the neck at the root of the tongue, right through to the mouth [...]'.

505 Io.Scyl., 469 (v. 50–60); Wortley 2010, 439.

506 Jonathan Shepard suggests a lasting friendly relationship existed between Koulinos and Katakalon. This would be evidenced by the seal of an imperial commander, dated 1054/55, discovered on the lower Danube. Katakalon Kekaumenos had already become a duke of Antioch by that time. Shepard 2013, 222–224.

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However, the Pechenegs were ruthless towards their enemies and did not refrain from exercising extreme, even bestial cruelty. The rules of war on the steppe, which assumed the complete destruction of the enemy, did not allow for mercy to be shown to the defeated. The nomads did not hesitate from killing captive warriors, and their murdering of prisoners aroused considerable disgust among Byzantine authors. Michael Psellos writes about this practice among the Pechenegs with a similar revulsion.[507] A very characteristic example, described by John Skylitzes, was the behaviour of Kegenes, who crossed the Danube together with two of the thirteen Pecheneg tribes and entered into the service of Constantine IX Monomachos.[508] Shortly afterwards, when the remainder of the ethnos moved onto Byzantine lands, Kegenes together with the imperial troops inflicted a devastating defeat on them. These Pechenegs and their leader Tyrach were taken captive and were at the mercy of their conquerors. Kegenes strongly advised the Byzantine commanders, almost pleading with them, to slaughter the captured Pechenegs, starting with the young men. He referred to a certain barbarian adage (παροιμία βάρβαρος), which succinctly expressed that a snake should be killed in winter, when it cannot move its tail, before it causes suffering and trouble when heated by the sun.[509] The captives – it should be emphasized that this included both warriors and their families – could have numbered from several dozen thousand up to a hundred thousand. Kegenes' proposal was probably in fact to murder the elites of the individual tribes, and to spare the rest of the people, as the ambitious leader probably wanted to assume leadership over the entire ethnos.[510] Such a course of action would seem to correspond to the logic of steppe battles, during which only members of the aristocracy were ruthlessly eliminated, since, if left alive, they could have attempted to retaliate. However, the Byzantine commanders considered the solutions proposed by Kegenes to be 'a barbaric and impious act, unworthy of Roman civilization'.[511]

507 Cf. note 60.

508 Cf. the conclusion of Chapter 6 of the present book.

509 Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 67–70); Wortley 2010, 430.

510 Genghis Khan ordered the murder of all Tatars taller than the axel of a carriage, which in practice meant the fulfillment of Kegenes' idea, i.e., the killing of the whole population with the exception of children (starting with young men). In *The Secret History of the Mongols*, however, there is a statement that those of the Tartars who survived were to become slaves. The conclusion is that only the elites were exterminated. Genghis Khan dealt with the Taiči'ut in a similar way, i.e., he murdered the aristocrats and subjugated the people who used to be their subjects. Rachewiltz 2004, I, 70, 77.

511 Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 71–72). Cf. Bonarek 2003, 95–96.

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John Skylitzes also mentions the ruthless murder of the inhabitants of Thrace and Macedonia by the Pechenegs after their victory in the Battle of Adrianople (June 1050). At that time, the entire people fell victim to their atrocities, and not even infants were spared (τὰ θηλάζοντα νήπια).[512] Michael Attaleiates writes about another manifestation of incredible barbarity, the victim of which was the patrician Michael Dokeianos, one of the Byzantine commanders taken captive at Adrianople. When he was brought before an unidentified leader of the Pechenegs, he managed to grab his sword and kill him. In retaliation, he was summarily executed. His abdomen was then cut open, his intestines pulled out, and his severed hands and legs placed inside.[513] Yet, Dokeianos' behaviour had indeed been reckless. Although he proved his incredible courage and contempt for the enemy, which, of course, was appreciated by Michael Attaleiates, we can assume that such a deed by a prisoner-of-war would have met with harsh retaliation by any army. Finally, Anna Komnena mentions that the Pechenegs, after they won the battle with Alexios Komnenos, had intended to murder their Byzantine captives. Ultimately, however, this desire was outweighed by the pragmatic stance of the common warriors, who opposed such a mass extermination and hoped to obtain a large ransom instead.[514]

In order to avoid excessive one-sidedness, it is worth noting that the Byzantines also succumbed to a kind of 'moral fatigue'. The uplifting spirit of Skylitzes' story about the imperial commanders' behaviour towards Tyrach's Pechenegs should be contrasted with the history of the captives from Lebounion (1091). On the night after the battle, a significant part of the steppe people were murdered allegedly without Alexios I's knowledge.[515] This circumstance raises the question of whether the demise of the Pechenegs as an independent ethnos, which occurred at that time, was a consequence of losses suffered during the battle itself, or rather a 'final solution' on the night after it?

A long-lasting conflict with any enemy inevitably leads to the dehumanization of the opponent, which in turn leads to the weakening of all moral barriers. In the 1080s, the Pechenegs became a very serious threat to the empire. Their attitude must have aroused particular frustration among the Byzantine elites, who witnessed the total failure of their earlier hopes to assimilate the steppe dwellers. Given this situation, a conviction must have arisen that the

512 Io.Scyl., 471–472 (v. 23–26); Wortley 2010, 440.

513 Mich.Att., 60/61. Skylitzes knows about Dokeianos' death, but does not include the gruesome details. His accounts seem to indicate that the patrician fell in battle. Io.Scyl., 470 (v. 88–89); Wortley 2010, 439.

514 An.Kom., VII 4.4 (p. 216); Sewter 2009, 197.

515 An.Kom., VIII 6.1–2 (pp. 249–250); Sewter 2009, 227–228.

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only possible solution was the total extermination of the Pechenegs. Anna Komnena's shameful way of handling the Lebounion night massacre proves, however, that it was seen, at least by some parts of the Byzantine public, as a violation of moral standards.

The steppe people understood this in the exact opposite way. Killing a defeated enemy was not a sign of helplessness when no other means were available, but a standard, preventive measure which ruled out the possibility of retaliation. The slaughters attributed to the Pechenegs seem trivial compared to the feats of Genghis Khan or Amir Timur (Tamerlane). During their campaigns against the political powers of Central Asia and the Middle East, entire cities were razed to the ground and their inhabitants, if they did not have skills sought after by the aggressor, were often exterminated.[516] The atrocities they committed, which can only be attributed in part to the demands of politics or military strategy, lead researchers to look for explanations in the realm of their beliefs.

It is a fact that in nomadic communities, military prowess, measured by the number of enemies killed, was probably the most cultivated virtue. This is hardly surprising given the fact that these were communities in which every man capable of carrying a weapon was a warrior. Herodotus recalls that only those Scythian warriors who brought the heads of the enemies they had killed to their leader received a share of the plundered booty. They could also take part in community ceremonies, during which they received a cup of wine.[517] According to Sima Qian, an almost identical custom was known to the Xiongnu people.[518] The Chinese historian adds that the one who brought the body of a Xiongnu warrior killed in battle received his possessions.[519] *Virtus militaris* was therefore the main, if not sole, source of wealth. Possessing it also guaranteed one's membership in the community, while its absence meant exclusion from it.

516 On the performance of the army of Genghis Khan in Khwarazm, Khorasan, Armenia, Georgia, and Shirvan: Rašid ad-Din I 2, 209–213, 218–219, 227–228, 240–245. On the conquest of Iran by Hulagu Khan and the resulting destruction and massacres: Rašid ad-Din III, 25–43. Cf. Malowist 1976, 540–544. On Timur's expeditions and atrocities in connection with them: Gafurow 1991, 504–507; Małowist 1991, 41–46; Grousset 2006, 541, 545. Timur's inclination to cruelty distinguished him from other steppe rulers. In 1387, after capturing Isfahan, he ordered the heads of 70,000 inhabitants of the city to be cut off and a pyramid erected out of them. The same happened after the suppression of an uprising in Baghdad. At that time, the number of victims was said to amount to 90,000. 120 pyramids were constructed from these heads.

517 Hdt., IV 65–66 (pp. 262, 264).

518 Watson 1961, 164–165.

519 Watson 1961, 165.

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The bravery of a particular warrior was also emphasized in funeral rites. In Chinese chronicles, we find the following information about the funeral rites of the Blue Turks (Tujue):

> In the grave they make a space where they place a painted portrait of the deceased and battle scenes in which he participated. If the deceased had ever killed a man [in battle], they place a stone [in front of the grave], i.e., or each man killed they erect a stone.[520]

A similar way of accentuating the courage of fallen warriors was also found in the Black Sea and Caspian steppe. The Persian poet Nizami (12th/13th century) mentions stone figures, most probably stone *babas*, which are surrounded by a forest of wooden arrows, as numerous as 'the grass on the seashore'.[521] According to Wacław Kotwicz's interpretation, these arrows symbolized killed enemies, like the stones used in the Turkic ceremony.[522] A fragment of the Ahmad ibn Fadlan's account takes us a step further. He writes about the funeral rites of the Uzes:

> If he has shown great bravery and killed someone, they carve wooden images, as many as the men he has killed, place them on top of his grave and say, "His retainers who serve him in the Garden."[523]

Ibn Fadlan's observation is of particular value to our discussion, not only because of the cultural proximity of the Uzes to the Pechenegs (archaeologists tend to almost equate the two), but above all because of their shared belief that after death a slain enemy became the slave of the warrior who killed him. It seems that this belief was quite common among the steppe peoples.[524] It is also found in Hungarian chronicles, which report on the adventures of two Old Hungarian warriors named Bulchu and Leel. During the invasion of Bavaria they are said to have been captured by the army of Conrad I (911–918). Before their death, one of the two, the chronicles usually point to Leel, craftily killed the German ruler. At the time of the murder, he is supposed to have said to his victim: 'You will go before me and you will serve me in the afterworld.' The chronicles comment on this legendary story by saying that the 'Scythians'

520 Liu Mau-Tsai 1958, 42. English translation: Šmahelová 2014, 104–105.
521 Kotwicz 1928, 5.
522 Kotwicz 1928, 6.
523 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 208/209, Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 27; Kovalevskii 1956, 128; Frye 2005, 39.
524 Małowist 1991, 46.

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believe that the dead are slaves of their murderers in the afterlife.[525] The fear of such a fate prompted warriors to commit suicide, as a last resort in a hopeless situation. This is evidenced by Leo the Deacon's account on the beliefs of members of the warriors (*druzhina*) of prince Sviatoslav Igorevich.[526] If the Byzantine author had in mind here mainly the Rus', this would be proof that the set of beliefs in question was not typical only of the peoples of the steppe.[527]

These beliefs belonged, however, to the warrior ethos, which differed fundamentally from the ideal of the soldier or knight developed by the Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. In the portrayals of the steppe dwellers written by Byzantine authors, but not only by them, the image of nomads as hordes of predatory animals that owe their strength in combat mainly to their wildness was very common. They did not prevail thanks to their tactics, strategy and weaponry – in a word, the art of war – but rather to their primeval, 'animal fierceness'.[528] This image is undoubtedly a stereotype, but to a certain extent, it appears to be based on real-life events. The military skills of steppe societies were highly developed in many respects, but the fact remains that in combat, like other barbarian peoples, they sought to become something akin to wild carnivorous beasts. Certain rituals, such as drinking the blood of a defeated enemy or human blood in general,[529] and perhaps cannibalistic practices,[530] were meant to achieve this goal. By means of such actions, a warrior renounced his humanity, and therefore the limitations, laws and customs that regulated

525 Leel was said to ask to be allowed to blow the horn before his death. When they agreed and the instrument was handed over to the prisoner, he unexpectedly hit Conrad's forehead with it, which killed the German king. Sim.Kéza, 169; Chr.Hung., 308; Chr.Mon., 65; Chr.Müg., 142–143; Chr.Ryth.Müg., 253–254; Joh.Thur., § 243–244 (p. 71).

526 LeoDiac., IX 8 (pp. 151–152); Talbot, Sullivan 2005, 195.

527 Most researchers assume, however, that these beliefs were typical of the steppe dwellers, which Leon mistakenly attributed to the Rus'. Moravcsik 1955, 74–76; Terras 1965, 401.

528 Paroń 2011, 127–128.

529 According to Herodotus, a Scythian drinks the blood of the first opponent he felled in battle (Hdt., IV 64 (pp. 260, 262)). Drinking human blood was commonly attributed to Hungarians in the early period of their history. Regino, sub anno 889 (p. 133), and many Latin chroniclers after him. Cf. Paroń 2011, 131–132. See also Liutprand., II 2 (p. 37).

530 The Hungarians reportedly devoured the hearts of the people they captured (Regino, sub anno 889 (p. 133)); the Pechenegs were also said to practice cannibalism and eat the flesh of corpses (cf. part two of this chapter). Generally speaking, ascribing cannibalistic practices to various Eurasian nomadic peoples was a fairly common motif in medieval European literature. It is usually difficult to determine whether we are dealing with slander, a real ritual that has been greatly exaggerated, or an extreme hunger-driven necessity. Cf. Guzman 1991, 31–68; Schmieder 2005, 159–179; Gießauf 2006, 118, 123, 129; Paroń 2011, 131–132.

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human behaviour ceased to apply to him, as he had become a wild beast possessed by *furor heroicus*.[531] The opponent was also dehumanized and was granted the status of game. If he were a particularly dangerous and powerful enemy, when he died, he would provide a trophy in the form of specially processed skull.[532] This custom, common among the steppe peoples, was also practiced among the Pechenegs.[533]

During a military expedition, steppe warriors would become a horde of wild animals, a pack of wolves that would tear to pieces everything and everyone they encountered. Their actions were controlled only by their specific tactical and strategic goals. Glaring displays of cruelty could be interpreted as an element of their terror tactics, aimed at weakening the will to fight in the community under attack. A shock dose of terror atomizes a society, turning it into a group of intimidated individuals incapable of resistance. Explanations of this kind, however, should not obscure the fact that an attack on another community could have been understood by the steppe dwellers as a kind of primeval hunt, during which warriors pursued prey like a horde of wild animals. From such a perspective, every military expedition was a re-creation, a renewal, of a primeval myth, with every warrior becoming a wolf, a hunter and a predator.[534] Crossing beyond the boundaries of humanity, becoming a wild beast, and unleashing its distinctive murderous impulses was exactly the opposite of the military ethos typical of the Byzantine Empire and Latin Europe. The Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions assumed that a primeval warrior would be tamed and his thirst for murder curbed. He was to turn into a soldier or knight who turns to violence in strictly defined situations, and never against the defenceless or those who, like prisoners-of-war, relied on his grace.

The military prowess of the Pechenegs, though frightening, prompted neighbouring political powers to ally with them or simply benefit from their short-term military support. Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus was in favour of close cooperation with these nomads. Other rulers were more inclined to treat them as useful mercenaries. Even the most short-lived cooperation required a guarantee of loyalty from the steppe people. They were often required to hand over hostages, which is what the Byzantine patrician John Bogas did when he formed an alliance with the Pechenegs against Simeon, the

531 Eliade 1972, 5–8, 18–20.

532 Ma Yong 1989, 184–190.

533 The Pecheneg prince Kuria supposedly made a cup out of the skull of Prince Sviatoslav Igorevich after he was killed at the Dnieper Rapids. PVL 1, AM 6480 (972), col. 74.

534 Cf. Eliade 1988, 1.

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ruler of Bulgaria.[535] Constantine VII advised following the same procedure.[536] The Rus' also demanded hostages, as evidenced by the example of Prince Igor, who benefited from the help of Pecheneg mercenaries during his expedition against the Greeks (944).[537] Such agreements were confirmed with solemn vows, which, as Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes, the steppe people swore according to their own customs.[538] Unfortunately, we do not know what the text of the oath sworn by the Pechenegs or the related ceremony was like, but its form can be inferred from comparative data. For example, it is known that the Danube Bulgars swore an oath on their swords.[539] The ceremony may have been accompanied by a sacrifice, as indicated by the passage from Michael Psellos cited earlier in the chapter.[540] While taking the oath to adhere to a peace agreement with Byzantine, the Bulgars representing Omurtag chopped up bodies of dogs they had sacrificed earlier.[541] The Mongols preceded their taking of a 'supreme oath' with the sacrifice of a stallion, an ox and a male dog. The animals were killed with a sword, and the following pledge was uttered:

> Oh God! Oh Heaven! Oh Earth! Listen to us. We are taking an oath [...]. If we do not keep our word and break our oath, we should become like these animals.[542]

However, even the most solemnly sworn agreements could be broken. Byzantine and other authors constantly complained about betrayals of trust by the Pechenegs. This was an element present in almost every description of them. It is difficult to resist the impression that attributing breeches of faith to steppe peoples was a kind of *topos*. Pechenegs, as pagans and barbarians, by definition deserved epithets like 'unfaithful and infamous'. In some cases, however, we are dealing with more than just a stereotypical quality. Nikephoros Bryennios, duke of Dyrrachion and a contender for the imperial throne after the overthrow of Michael VII Dukas, enjoyed a peculiar form of loyalty from the steppe dwellers. Though the Pechenegs were allies in his struggle for

535 Th.Cont., 386–387; Io.Scyl., 201–202 (v. 49–55); Wortley 2010, 196.

536 DAI, VII–VIII (pp. 54–57).

537 PVL 1, AM 6452 (944), col. 45.

538 DAI, VIII (p. 56/7).

539 Nic.Pap., LXVII (p. 591). Cf. Zlatarski 1972a, 181–189; Tryjarski 1975, 327.

540 Cf. note 60.

541 Th.Cont., 31. Cf. Tryjarski 1975, 327. The sacrifice of dogs while swearing to abide by political treaties was also practiced by the Hungarians and the Cumans. Sinor 1992, 301–307.

542 Rašid ad-Din, I 2, 189; Togan 1998, 94. Cf. Kałużyński 1983, 99. Another oath-taking ritual recorded in *The Secret History of the Mongols* was the cutting in half crosswise of a stallion and a mare. Rachewiltz 2004, I, 63.

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power, this did not prevent them from surrounding Adrianople, home of the Bryennios family, and threatening to attack the city. They left only after obtaining a handsome ransom.[543] They behaved equally viciously during the Battle of Galabrye (1078), which was a decisive conflict in the struggle for control of the empire. In it the nomads fought as allies of Nikephoros Bryennios. Their role was to attack the rear of the army commanded by Alexios Komnenos, who was then serving as Commander-in-chief (*domestikos tōn scholōn*) under Emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates. Initially, the nomads dutifully fulfilled this task, forcing some of the enemy units to flee. However, when they saw the enemy retreating in panic, they did not purse them, but instead, led by a lust for spoils, attacked Bryennios's rear guard, which created confusion in the ranks of the army, as warriors fled from them.[544] This act of betrayal contributed to the defeat of the former duke of Dyrrachion. Another example is provided by Thietmar, who describes an episode during Bolesław I the Brave's first expedition to Kiev (1013) involving the rebellion of a Pecheneg auxiliary unit. Unfortunately, we do not know the reason for their mutiny, but this time, their turning against their ally was severely punished. The Polish ruler ordered the execution of the steppe-dwellers.[545] Finally, during the last war between the Pechenegs and the Byzantine Empire, which took place in the years 1087–1091, the Pechenegs regularly violated agreements.[546]

Behaviour of this kind inevitably led to the construction of an image of the Pechenegs as extremely disloyal and unpredictable political partners. Such a perception of them, as we have seen, was dictated by actual experiences and not only by literary traditions. Another situation that contributed to the creation of the image of the Pechenegs as lacking a political shape was the lack of an overt decision-making centre. Their segmented political structure indeed made it difficult for neighbouring states to develop a means of communicating with them. In order for any political agreement to be binding for the whole community, it had to be accepted by all the tribes of the community, or at least the most important ones. These circumstances also made it more difficult for the nomads to hold to an agreement.

This multi-headed organism might have seemed to the elites of the neighbouring monarchies to be something akin to a horde of wild animals with which one could not make an arrangement, one which could not be controlled, and

543 Mich.Att., 476/7–478/9; Io.Zon., XVIII 18 (p. 717); Trapp 1986, 153. Cf. Chapter 7 of the present book.

544 Mich.Att., 528/9; Nic.Bryenn., IV 6–7, 9–13 (pp. 269–279); An.Kom., I 5–6 (pp. 20–27); Sewter 2009, 17–23. Cf. Chapter 7 of the present book.

545 Thietmar, VI 91 (p. 382).

546 Cf. Chapter 7 of the present book.

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which used and only understood the language of violence. It must be admitted, however, that the Pechenegs themselves contributed to this perception. At decisive moments they opted for instinctive solutions, which most often involved following native traditions and emphasizing their independence. Due to the absence of a strong decision-making centre, however, they did not understand the consequences of their choices, nor were they able to develop a far-reaching political strategy.

Their sense of community was based on an ethnic awareness that was experienced and manifested in various ways. Traditions were the main factor bonding the Pecheneg community. Unfortunately, little is known about these. Comparative material allows us merely to affirm the attachment of the people in question to a nomadic lifestyle and the activities associated with it. We know very little about the Pechenegs' native beliefs, although they were probably – through institutions typical of steppe religions (e.g., the cult of ancestors) – one of the main determinants of their sense of community. The lack of data on a common *origo gentis* is troubling and puzzling. Apart from information about the 'Kangar' tribes, we do not know anything about the traditional version of the story of the origins of the Pechenegs. It is difficult to say whether this is due to gaps in our source base or to the true absence of such a story, stemming from the nature of their political organization, which shifted the cultivation of community traditions to the level of the individual tribe. The Pechenegs certainly cultivated their genealogy, though this also mostly occurred within the individual units of their political organization.

The strength of the ethnic solidarity among the Pechenegs is often questioned.[547] Researchers emphasize in particular the alleged tendency of nomads to work in the service of foreign political powers (especially Byzantium) and the abundance of internal feuds that split their political organism. This kind of argument is not very convincing because such problems affected every community. Nothing here proves the particular susceptibility of the Pechenegs to the influence of various centrifugal tendencies. Even the betrayal of Kegenes, who could seemingly be considered an almost exemplary renegade, should be seen as an example of attachment to the community. The fact that he acted against it, or more specifically, against its leaders, should not obscure the fact that this community remained an important reference point for his actions to the very end. In fact, he consistently sought to gain power over the entire Pecheneg ethnos. His initial defeat in his rivalry with Tyrach resulted in Kegenes' finding himself outside the community. Together with his

547 Cf. first part of this chapter.

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supporters, he became an outcast, a lone wolf. His entering into Byzantine service was not a break or a change in identity, but rather a means to continue carrying on his challenge.[548] Of course, there were cases of voluntary or forced abandonment of the native ethnos among the Pecheneg tribes. However, these were not always irreversible; moreover, they were often associated with cultivating the old (Pecheneg) identity in the new community. Although we do not know much about the components of the Pechenegs' ethnic traditions, it is worth remembering that for about 300 years these steppe-dwellers existed as an independent political organism, despite having experienced a number of severe crises that could have shattered their community. It would not have been possible to survive for such a long period of time without the existence and constant renewal of a strong sense of identity.

548 Cf. Chapters 6 and 7.

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CHAPTER 5

The Apex of the Pechenegs' Political Importance

5.1 Borders and Internal Territorial Divisions of the Newly-Created Patzinacia

As a result of the events described in Chapter Three, the Pechenegs assumed control over vast stretches of the Black Sea steppe. We owe our knowledge of their move to a new homeland to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who wrote in Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio*:

> Four tribes of the Pechenegs, that is to say, the thema of Kouartzitour and the thema of Syroukalpeï and the thema of Borotalmat and the thema of Boulatzopon, lie beyond the Dnieper river towards the eastern and northern parts that face Uzia and Chazaria and Alania and Cherson and the rest of the klimata. The other four tribes lie on this side of the Dnieper river, towards the western and northern parts, that is to say that the thema of Giazichopon is neighbour to Bulgaria, the thema of Kato Gyla is neighbour to Tourkia, the thema of Charaboï is neighbour to Rus', and the thema of Iabdiertim is neighbour to the tributary territories of the country of Rus', to the Oultines and Dervlenines and Lenzenines and the rest of the Slavs. Patzinacia is distant a five days journey from Uzia and Chazaria, a six days journey from Alania, a ten days journey from Mordia, one day's journey from Rus', a four days journey from Tourkia, half a day's journey from Bulgaria; to Cherson it is very near, and to Bosporus closer still.[1]

1 DAI, XXXVII (p. 168/169). ''Ιστέον, ὅτι αἱ τέσσαρες τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν γενεαί, ἤγουν τὸ θέμα Κουαρτζιτζοὺρ καὶ τὸ θέμα Συρουκαλπέη καὶ τὸ θέμα Βοροταλμὰτ καὶ τὸ θέμα Βουλατζοπόν, κεῖνται πέραν τοῦ Δανάπρεως ποταμοῦ πρὸς τὰ ἀνατολικώτερα καὶ βορειότερα μέρη, ἐναποβλέποντα πρὸς τε Οὐζίαν καὶ Χαζαρίαν καὶ Ἀλανίαν καὶ τὴν Χερσῶνα καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ κλίματα. Αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι τέσσαρες γενεαὶ κεῖνται ἔνθεν τοῦ Δανάπρεως ποταμοῦ πρὸς τὰ δυτικώτερα καὶ ἀρκτικώτερα μέρη, τουτέστιν τὸ θέμα Γιαζιχοπὸν πλησιάζει τῇ Βουλγαρίᾳ, τὸ δὲ θέμα τοῦ κάτω Γύλα πλησιάζει τῇ Τουρκίᾳ, τὸ δὲ θέμα τοῦ Χαραβόη πλησιάζει τῇ Ῥωσίᾳ, τὸ δὲ θέμα Ἰαβδιερτὶμ πλησιάζει τοῖς ὑποφόροις χωρίοις χώρας τῆς Ῥωσίας, τοῖς τε Οὐλτίνοις καὶ Δερβλενίνοις καὶ Λενζενίνοις καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς Σκλάβοις. Ἀπώκισται δὲ ἡ Πατζινακία ἐκ μὲν Οὐζίας καὶ Χαζαρίας ὁδὸν ἡμερῶν πέντε, ἐκ δὲ Ἀλανίας ὁδὸν ἡμερῶν ἓξ, ἀπὸ δὲ Μορδίας ὁδὸν ἡμερῶν δέκα, ἀπὸ δὲ Ῥωσίας ὁδὸν ἡμέρας μιᾶς, ἀπὸ δὲ Τουρκίας ὁδὸν ἡμερῶν τεσσάρων, ἀπὸ δὲ Βουλγαρίας ὁδὸν ἡμέρας τὸ ἥμισυ, καὶ εἰς Χερσῶνα μέν ἐστιν ἔγγιστα, εἰς δὲ τὴν Βόσπορον πλησιέστερον.'

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In Chapter 42, the learned *Basileus* adds:

> From the lower reaches of the Danube river, opposite to Distra, Patzinacia stretches along, and its inhabitants control the territory as far as Sarkel, the fortress of the Chazars [...].[2]

A key issue and one that offers a starting point for our discussion in this chapter is the problem of the borders of Patzinacia. In light of the two above passages, the most obvious interpretation is that the newcomers occupied the area from the Lower Danube to the Don. This territory roughly corresponds to the former domain of the Magyars, called by them Etelköz.[3] This information leads to the conclusion that the Pechenegs extended their rule over this area relatively quickly in the late 9th or early 10th century.

However, this interpretation has long been controversial. A number of primarily Bulgarian and Romanian researchers question the value of the written sources used to reconstruct the borders of the territory occupied by the Pechenegs at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries.[4] The information contained in *De administrando imperio*, especially Chapter 42, is supposed to describe the state of political affairs at the time the work was written, i.e., the mid-10th century. This suggests that the steppe peoples conquered the territories west of the Dniester as late as around 950 or shortly before. Bulgarian scholars also refer to certain fragments of *De administrando imperio* that apparently indicate the existence of a Bulgarian state dominating the left bank of the Danube even in the times of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. In the initial part of Chapter Eight, we find a reference that some Pecheneg tribes supposedly inhabited some part of Bulgaria, located near the Dnieper, Dniester and 'the other rivers of those parts.'[5] This account clearly shows, however, that the part of Bulgaria across the Danube was already in the hands of the Pechenegs, so it is difficult to consider the passage as a decisive argument in this dispute. One can attempt on its basis to prove the existence of Bulgarian control over some part of the Black Sea steppe region, but not during the time *De administrando imperio* was

2 DAI, XLII (p. 182/183). ''Απὸ δὲ κάτωθεν τῶν μερῶν Δανούβεως ποταμοῦ τῆς Δίστρας ἀντίπερα ἡ Πατζινακία παρέρχεται, καὶ κατακρατεῖ ἡ κατοικία αὐτῶν μέχρι τοῦ Σάρκελ, τοῦ τῶν Χαζάρων κάστρου, [...].' The English translation of R.J.H. Jenkins in both quoted passages has been slightly modified.

3 DAI, XXXVII 68–71 (p. 170); XXXVIII 64–71 (p. 174); XL 23–25 (p. 176). Cf. Chapter 3 of the present book.

4 Diaconu 1970, 11–25; Bozhilov 1973, 37–62; Dimitrov 2011, 208–216; Cf. Mladjov 1998, 85–128.

5 DAI, VIII 5–7 (p. 54/55). Cf. Bozhilov 1973, 55–59; Mladjov 1998, 87; Dimitrov 2011, 209.

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written. In the following chapter, devoted to navigation along the trade route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', there is a brief mention that the Rus' were no longer under any threat from the Pechenegs after passing by the island of St. Gregory situated on the Dnieper River. The nomads posed a danger to them again only in the vicinity of Sulina, the middle branch of the Danube Delta.[6] This information was also the basis for speculation about the Bulgarians possessing territory across the Danube. It was assumed that since the Pechenegs could not reach the Rus' while sailing between the mouths of the Dnieper and the Danube, some part of the Black Sea coast and its interior must have been under the political control of Bulgarian groups situated between the two rivers.[7] However, it is easy to agree with Dimitri Obolensky that the only conclusion that can be drawn from the above mention in *De administrando imperio* is that the Rus' sailed on the open sea between the mouth of the Dnieper and Sulina, where they were safe from attack by the Pechenegs.[8]

The possibility of Bulgarian dominion over areas north of the Danube in the 10th century is also supposedly proven by a passage in John Skylitzes' chronicle in which the author describes events accompanying the restoration of the Byzantine border on the lower Danube. Emperor John I Tzimiskes is said to have met with the commanders of border strongholds to accept tribute from them. It is rightly assumed that these were the commanders of Bulgarian fortifications, which the chronicler describes as 'Constantia and the other fortresses established beyond the Danube.'[9] However, this passage raises serious doubts. In Skylitzes' wording there is clear logical conjunctive link between 'Constantia and the other fortresses', which leads us to conclude that they should be located on the same, north bank of the river. The problem here is that Romanian researchers have located the above-mentioned fortification in Dobrudja, south of the Danube.[10] This renders interpretation of Skylitzes' passage problematic. Finally, we should note that the existence of Bulgarian fortresses in the foreground of the Danube has not been archaeologically

6 DAI, IX 78–79, 93–98 (pp. 60–63).

7 Dimitrov 2011, 208.

8 DAI-Com., 56.

9 Io.Scyl., 301 (v. 97–98); Wortley 2010, 287. 'πρέσβεις ἐκ Κωνσταντείας καὶ τῶν ἄλλων φρουρίων τῶν πέραν ἱδρυμένων τοῦ Ἴστρου.' Cf. Diaconu 1970, 23–24 (also n. 40).

10 Diaconu 1970, 24 (also n. 40); Madgearu 2013, 32–35. The latter assumes that the quoted passage refers to some strongholds located in the foreland of Dorostolon (Dristra), which would mean that they would be located at the borders of the Pecheneg sphere of influence described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

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confirmed.[11] The absence of the Bulgarian centres of power in this region also seem to be very revealing.[12]

One last argument for a Bulgarian presence is the creation of a military province called 'Western Mesopotamia' (Μεσοποταμία τῆς Δύσεως) in the last quarter of the 10th century, after the restoration of the Byzantine border on the Danube. On the mere basis of this fact, it has been assumed that it was established in formerly Bulgarian territory, which was probably located north of the lower reaches of the Danube. Today, however, the dominant view seems to be that this 'interfluve' was located in northern Dobrudja.[13]

A review of the interpretations above seems to indicate that the information from available narrative sources do not provide grounds for questioning the notion of Pecheneg dominance over the Black Sea steppe from the Don to the Lower Danube at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries.

A more complicated picture is drawn by analyses of archaeological data. It has long been noted that the oldest archaeological sites possibly associated with the Pechenegs, of which the vast majority are burial sites, are located between the Prut and Dniester Rivers and date back to the latter half of the 10th century.[14] A characteristic feature of these sites is that they often occur in the vicinity of findings attributed to the agricultural population of the Dridu culture. Only in the early years of the following century did the settled population begin to gradually withdraw to mountain and upland areas, less typical of the nomads or simply more difficult for them to access.[15] More to the west, in

11 The only fortress that can be associated with the Bulgarian state is the Slon fortification, located on the southern ridge of the Carpathian Mountains and abandoned in the first decades of the 10th century. Cf. Ciupercă 2010, 281. In addition, the Giurgiu fortification, dating back to the late 10th century, is located west of Dristra. Cf. Ioaniţă 2005, 49–54, 174 (fig. 2).

12 It is worth mentioning that fortifications enable effective control of a particular region. Movable remains of a people's presence, although they undoubtedly indicate a cultural influence, cannot be treated as evidence of political domination. Cf. Comşa 1960, 395–422. Comşa assumes that findings from the northern bank of the Danube, dating from the 9th or 10th century show similar features to those from the south (Pliska, Madara, Preslav, Rasgrad, Popina, etc.), which proves the political control Bulgarian rulers exerted over this region, and which supposedly only ceased during the reign of Tsar Peter, around 950.

13 Madgearu 1999, 421; 2013, 41–42. The 'Western Mesopotamia' *thema* is considered to have been located between the Danube, the Caraş valley and the Black Sea.

14 Diaconu 1970, 15–17; Bálint 1989, 142, 144; Ioaniţă 2004, 469 (21 burials, which the researcher dates to the 11th or 12th centuries and considers to be of Pecheneg or Cuman origin); 2010, 115–134; Postică 2007, 91.

15 Diaconu 1970, 37–48; 1975, 237; Spinei 1975, 274; 1986, 103. Cf. Chapter 6.2 of the present book.

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the area of the Bărăgan Plain (eastern Wallachia), Pecheneg burial sites are much less frequent and usually date back to the 11th century. Researchers working in the area between the Lower Danube and the southern arch of the Carpathians point to a clear drop in the number of open agricultural settlements during that century. This phenomenon persists in the following centuries.[16]

The findings presented above are very important, but it is essential to clarify what they actually prove, and, to be more precise, whether they indicate the increasing presence of nomads in areas west of the Dniester, and whether they might also indicate the nature of the process by which this political penetration took place. It is difficult to question the first point. The Pechenegs, who in the late 10th century most likely began to withdraw under pressure from the Uzes, most likely lost some of their encampment areas east of the Dnieper River. As a result, a part of this people was forced to move onto the steppe of the Prut-Dniester interfluve, which in turn led to the exodus of the local agricultural population.[17] In terms of the Pechenegs' political influence, the situation is somewhat different. Available comparative material provides a sufficient basis for concluding that the introduction of nomad political domination over such settled communities did not necessarily result in a disturbance in the lives of the latter, as confirmed by archaeological material. It was usually in the interest of the nomads to subordinate the agricultural population and take advantage of its labour, and never to destroy these communities without legitimate cause. It is worth noting that the Avar Khaganate, the heart of which comprised the river valley of the Tisza and the central Danube, had under its control numerous Slavic and Germanic (mainly Gepids) communities, and even a post-Roman population.[18] The existence of an enclave of such a group is confirmed by findings from the area south of Lake Balaton.[19]

This same phenomenon is even more evident in the case of the Khazar Empire. In addition to a heartland centre located on the steppe between the Caucasus, Caspian Sea, Don and lower Volga and inhabited by the state's political elites, the imperial rulers controlled huge stretches of land that transcended the borders of the steppe and forest steppe and was inhabited by a very culturally diverse population.[20] Finally, there is the example of 'Old Scythia' or, following the classification of Anatoly Khazanov,[21] the Second Scythian

16 Comşa 1960, 422; Ioaniţă 2005, 110; Spinei 2009, 105–106, 198.
17 Cf. Chapter 6.1 of the present book.
18 Szymański 1979, 52–63; Pohl 1988, 225–236; Vida 2008, 13–46.
19 Müller 1992, 278–281; Heinrich-Tamáska 2012, 228–232.
20 Dunlop 1954, 140–142; Noonan 2001, 77. Cf. also Chapter 2 of the present book.
21 Khazanov 1978b, 427–429.

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Kingdom, which stretched across the Black Sea steppe, between the Don and the Danube. Its political centre, inhabited by the Royal Scythians, was located on the steppe to the east of the Dnieper-Borysthenes, while the territories to the west of the river were occupied by agricultural communities.[22]

This last analogy is quite revealing. It seems to clarify uncertainties about the Pechenegs' abilities to the quickly bring areas west of the Dniester River under their control. They were most likely mainly based more to the east, but this does not change the fact that relatively early on, probably in the early 10th century, they extended their control west all the way to Dristra, onto the Bărăgan Plain. They did all the more easily because the only political power capable of stopping them at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries was Bulgaria, which under Simeon's rule (893–927) was engaged in a fierce rivalry with the Byzantine Empire, which obviously had to limit its activity on the Black Sea steppe.

The Pechenegs thus controlled wide stretches of land from the lower Don and the Khazar stronghold of Sarkel to the lower Danube. The southern border of their sphere of influence ran from the mouth of the Don along the northern shores of the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea to the Danube Delta, all the way to Dristra. It is not clear however whether the areas around the estuaries of the Don, Dnieper, Dniester and Danube were also controlled by the Pechenegs.[23] It is believed that the island of St. Eterius, located at the mouth of Dnieper, was in the hands of the Byzantine Empire.[24] In the case of the Danube, the Pechenegs had access to Sulina, the middle branch of its mouth. There is also contradictory information about the presence of these nomads in the Crimea. Their permanent settlement in its northern, steppe regions seem to be confirmed by *De administrando imperio* (passage cited above). A reference in Chapter 42, however, seems to suggest another interpretation. Constantine VII mentions here that the ancients (οἱ παλαιοί) dug a canal across the Isthmus of Perekop, connecting Crimea with the continent. However, as time passed, the canal they created became filled with silt, and a large forest grew in its place, through which two roads led to the peninsula. These were supposedly used by the Pechenegs when they travelled to Kherson or the Bosporus.[25] The last statement would suggest that northern Crimea was not (at least in the time of Constantine VII) yet inhabited by them.[26] This troublesome contradiction

22 Cf. Chapter 2 of the present book.
23 Cf. Shcherbak 1959, 368.
24 DAI-Com., 56.
25 DAI, XLII 78–83 (p. 186).
26 Cf. Romashov 1999, 26.

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seems impossible to solve. We can only posit that the Pechenegs may have controlled northern Crimea, but may have also used it as an occasional site for their nomadic settlements.[27] The western border of Patzinacia was most likely the arching belt of the Carpathians, in the east the Pechenegs' political influence most likely reached the Don, though here too archaeological materials complicate the conclusions we can draw from the account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Communities associated with the Saltovo-Maiaki culture (connected with the Khazar Khaganate) in the forest steppe interfluve of the middle Don and upper Donets survived the migration of the Pechenegs. Their destruction came only in the latter half of the 10th century and was probably brought about not by the Pechenegs, but by the Rus'.[28] Some researchers also assume that the Black Bulgars lived on the northern shores of the Sea of Azov as early as at the early 10th century. Although they later moved to the north in the mid-10th century, their migration was gradual, so it did not represent a sudden flight from the Pechenegs.[29] In order to reconcile the image created by advancements in archaeological research with the data from written sources, it should be recognized that the situation at the eastern end of the Pechenegs' territory could have been analogous to that on the western end, i.e., the political expansion of the nomads may not have been accompanied by the expansion of their settlements. In some areas between the Don and Donets, cohabitation between the Saltovo-Maiaki population and nomads could have occurred.[30] The close proximity of the still strong Khazar Khaganate could also have led to the establishment of a division in terms of political influence, a sort of Khazar-Pecheneg condominium, especially in the forest steppe part of this area.

The northern border of Patzinacia is the most difficult to outline. Petr Golubovskii was among the first to express the seemingly accurate view that the border was really never clearly delineated during the Pechenegs' presence on the Black Sea steppe.[31] This could have been a frequent cause of tensions between the nomads and their settled neighbours.[32] Since the natural environment of the nomads were steppe and forest steppe areas, their borders can be used to determine the furthest extent of their political domination, which most

27 Contrary to the account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the Pecheneg burials found in this area seem to indicate this. Pletneva 1958, 154 (map); Garustovich, Ivanov 2001, 128–9 (map 1); Makarova, Aibabin 2003, 74–81.

28 Zhivkov 2015, 132–133.

29 Artamonov 1962, 358; Zhivkov 2015, 128–129.

30 Mikheev 1985, 99; Zhivkov 2015, 219.

31 Golubovskii 1884, 70; Cf. Shcherbak 1959, 375.

32 Noonan 1992, 303. Cf. also Chapter 4.4 of the present book.

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likely was the northern end of the forest steppe zone. This border is currently drawn along the following line: Rivne-Zhitomir-Kiev-Konotop-Briansk-Tula.[33] Topomastic data seems to indicate a Pecheneg presence as far as the vicinity of today's Kaluga,[34] as well as Przemyśl, Sokal, and Volodimir-Volins'kii, and thus crossing the boundaries of the forest zone.[35] The last cases, however, most likely represent instances of late settlement, when the Pechenegs had already lost their independence and were dispersed. The northern boundary of the Pecheneg sphere of influence was probably marked by the territories occupied by the young Rus' state and the East Slavic tribes subordinate to it. It is assumed that the Severians and Viatichi, who inhabited areas east of the Dnieper River, were forced to abandon their southernmost settlements. The Viatichi left an area on the upper Don that extended to the mouth of the Voronezh River. The Severians moved across the Sula River. The reason for both migrations was most likely the expansion of the Pechenegs.[36] The Uliches and Tiverians shared a similar fate. The former originally inhabited the territory on the right bank of the Dnieper River, from the rapids to the Tiasmin River, the settlements of the latter stretched between the Dniester, Prut and Danube to the Black Sea. As a result of the Pechenegs' arrival, the main centres of Ulich settlement moved to areas by the Stugna River, in the immediate vicinity of Kiev. Today it is known as the site of the Peresechen' stronghold. The Tiverians moved north of the estuary of the Reut, a right-bank tributary of the Dniester.[37] Therefore, based on data on the migration of East Slavic tribes, we can assume that the territory controlled by the Pechenegs in the north-east

33 Szymański 1990, 475. Cf. Chapter 1 of the present book.

34 Shcherbak 1959, 375.

35 Kucharski, Lewicki 1934, 45–46; Rasovskii 1933, 7; Kuczyński 1965, 42; 1954–56, 274.

36 Szymański 1990, 480, 484; 1973, 46; 1977, 412–413; Łowmiański 1975a, 177; Sedov 1982, 142; Timoshchuk 1995, 185; Zhivkov 2015, 219. Researchers, however, suggest different dates for when the Slavs supposedly left their homes by the Don River. Wojciech Szymański assumed that this had already happened by the end of the 9th century and connected this fact with the migration of the Pechenegs (especially in the case of the Viatichi). In the case of the Severians, Szymański suggested that the collapse of the 'Romny' culture associated with them occurred only in the 10th century and that this process was linked to the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate. Henryk Łowmiański dates the collapse of the Severian settlement process to the last decades of the 10th century and claims it was clearly connected with Pecheneg aggression against Rus'. Valentin Sedov makes similar points, though he places stronger emphasis on archaeological premises. Timoshchuk, meanwhile, dates the abandonment of the Severian settlements to the end of the 9th century.

37 Szymański 1973, 47; 1990, 478–479; Sedov 1982, 130, 132; Romashov 1999, 30–31; Spinei 2009, 87 (also for further literature on the subject). Spinei locates the Uliches a little further south, in the area of the central basin of the Boh River.

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probably reached the confluence of the Voronezh and Don Rivers. Its border then moved westwards through areas around the sources of the Donets and Vorskla, up to Sula, which it probably never crossed. On the right bank of the Dnieper, the Pechenegs were originally separated from Kiev by Ulich settlements, but in the mid-10th century, when due to a fierce rivalry with the Rurik dynasty, they moved onto the basin of the upper Boh and Dniester,[38] while the territory controlled by the nomads most likely moved closer to the capital. Next, the border of the Pechenegs' lands crossed the middle course of the Boh, the Dniester south of the mouth of the Reut, and the Prut and Siret, also in the middle course of both rivers, ultimately reaching the Carpathian Mountains.

This is what the borders of Patzinacia looked like; its internal divisions between the eight tribes mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus is a separate issue. There is no certainty as to when the boundaries of the territories occupied by Pechenegs were finally established. It can only be assumed that this happened shortly after the conquest of Etelköz. The most successful proposal thus far for establishing the location of the Pecheneg tribes has been that presented by György Györffy.[39] The Hungarian scholar based his conclusions not only on the contents of Chapter 37 of *De administrando imperio* cited above, but also on information from other parts of this work concerning how contacts with the Pechenegs were established. Constantine Porphyrogenitus claims that the Pechenegs could be found most often in the vicinity of rivers, because this is where they camped.[40] Györffy also refers to observations made by William of Rubruck and John of Pian de Carpini, according to which Mongolian chiefs, who lived a nomadic life on the Black Sea steppe several hundred years after the departure of the Pechenegs, would also move in an oscillating pattern of movement along the right or left bank of a river between their summer and winter encampment sites. The latter were located not far from the sea, and the former in the north, deep in the forest steppe.[41]

Therefore, taking into account all the factors described above, Györffy assumes that the Giazichopon tribe, which lived a nomadic life in the region close to Bulgaria, occupied the area between the Lower Danube and the southern arc of the Carpathian Mountains; the Kato Gyla/Chabouxingyla tribe, who were a four-day march from Tourkia, inhabited the area near the Prut and Siret

38 Sedov 1982, 132.

39 Györffy 1975, 283–292.

40 DAI, VIII 5–7, 34–35 (pp. 54, 56).

41 Györffy 1975, 290. Notably, this way of nomadic life corresponds not only to Mongol customs, but also to the majority of Eurasian steppe peoples. Cf. Chapters 1 and 4.2 of the present book (economic considerations).

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Rivers; the Iabdiertim tribe, adjacent to the Slavic tribes under Rus', controlled the area between the Dniester and Boh; and finally, the Charaboï tribe lived on the right bank of the Dnieper River. Constantine's information on the location of the tribes of Eastern Patzinacia is somewhat less precise; however, based on the same premises, the Hungarian researcher places the nomads of the Kouartzitzour tribe on the left bank of the Dnieper River, the Syroukalpeï tribe on the Donets River, the Boulatzopon on the right bank of the Don, and the Borotalmat on the coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, from the mouth of the Dnieper river to the mouth of the Don.[42]

Györffy's conclusions, although quite inspiring, are not without flaws. The researcher ignores certain archaeological data in his considerations, pointing to their questionable dating.[43] However, the information provided by these sources cannot be ignored. Therefore, Györffy's interpretation needs to be revised. It is difficult to assume that the Giazichopon tribe already inhabited Wallachia in the first half of the 10th century. It is equally unlikely that the Borotalmats would move along the northern shores of the Sea of Azov all year round. In this case, Györffy ignores the main premise underlying his own conclusions. However, many of his assumptions should be considered accurate. With some revisions, his placement of the left-bank Pechenegs, i.e., those inhabiting areas east of the Dnieper River, can be considered acceptable. The Kouartzitzour tribe could indeed have moved along the left bank of the Dnieper, the Syroukalpeï along the left bank of the Donets, and the Boulatzopon along the right bank of the Don. The Borotalmat tribe, on the other hand, could have

42 Györffy 1975, 290–291. Cf. Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, map no. 1 (pp. 8–9). For other attempts to locate tribes based on data provided by Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Csebe 1922, 209–219; Pletneva 1958, 154; Pritsak 1975, 218–219; Romashov 1999, 25–32; Kniaz'kii 2003, 24–30; Parczewski 2007, 168 (fig. 3). Csebe's reasoning is based on the order in which the names of the various tribes are mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The researcher focuses mainly on the tribes living on the right bank of the Dnieper River (cf. Tryjarski 1975a, 570–571; Kurat 1937, 52–55). Pletneva suggests a very general localization. Unlike Györffy, Pletneva does not place any of the tribes by the Danube. Pritsak allocates individual tribes mainly on the basis of data concerning the Pechenegs' neighbours, which makes his method highly debatable. Kniaz'kii is only concerned with the right-bank Pechenegs. He does not place any of the tribes on the Dniester, but locates as many as two tribes on the Danube (Giazichopon, Chabouxingyla). Although Michał Parczewski takes into account natural conditions, he completely ignores the realities of nomadic lifestyle. The last defect also applies to the other authors, which leads to acceptance of a fundamentally erroneous concept, according to which individual tribes among the nomadic community, such as the Pechenegs, would live only in the area of the steppe or forest steppe all year round, when in fact they had to move between them.

43 Györffy 1975, 287.

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had their encampments on the right bank of the Donets or on smaller rivers flowing into the Sea of Azov. The location of the western tribes requires greater correction. The Charaboï most likely camped on the right bank of the lower Dnieper River. The location proposed by Györffy is supported by Constantine Porphyrogenitus' information that this tribe was a neighbour of the Rus' (most likely Kiev). In my opinion, the presumed location of the Iabdiertim should be moved to the right bank of the Boh. This location is also determined by archaeology. According to the information found in *De administrando imperio*, this tribe was supposedly located in close vicinity to groups which paid tribute to Rus', including the Uliches, who are usually thought to have inhabited an area by the Boh. The Gyla/Chabouxingyla tribe's nomadic habitat stretched along the right bank of the Dniester, which in its upper course approaches the arc of the Carpathians, which seems to explain mentions that this group of the Pechenegs was adjacent to Tourkia. The problem of the Giazichopon tribe's location raises the most doubts. Archaeological data and the reality of steppe life do not allow us to accept the Lower Danube as a location for their encampments. At the same time, however, this group's very close proximity to Bulgaria (half a day away) requires recognition of its presence in the area of the lower course of the river, close to its delta. Moreover, in the vicinity of Sulina, as mentioned above, the Pechenegs posed a threat to Rus' sailors. Both premises constitute hard evidence for the permanent presence of one of these Pecheneg groups in the area of the Prut-Dniester interfluve in the times of Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

At that time, the Giazichopon tribe most likely already had encampments there (mainly in Budjak, on the left bank of the Lower Dniester, and along the middle course of the Prut). This was not one of the most prominent Pecheneg groups, which suggests that it was also not very numerous. This made it relatively easy for members of the tribe to find a *modus vivendi* with local farming communities, as indicated by archaeological data proving the cohabitation of both populations. The location of the Giazichopon also gave them control over the Pechenegs' western sphere of influence.

To conclude our consideration of the territorial divisions of Patzinacia, it should be noted that the reconstruction presented here remains valid for the first three-quarters of the 10th century. The collapse of the Khazar Khaganate, dated on the basis of data from *The Tale of the Bygone Years* to the year 965, which was accompanied by the expansion of the Uzes, brought about fundamental political changes on the Black Sea steppe. As a result of these changes, the image of Patzinacia in *De administrando imperio* in the last decades of the 10th century would become less and less accurate, and by the beginning of the next century, would already have become history.

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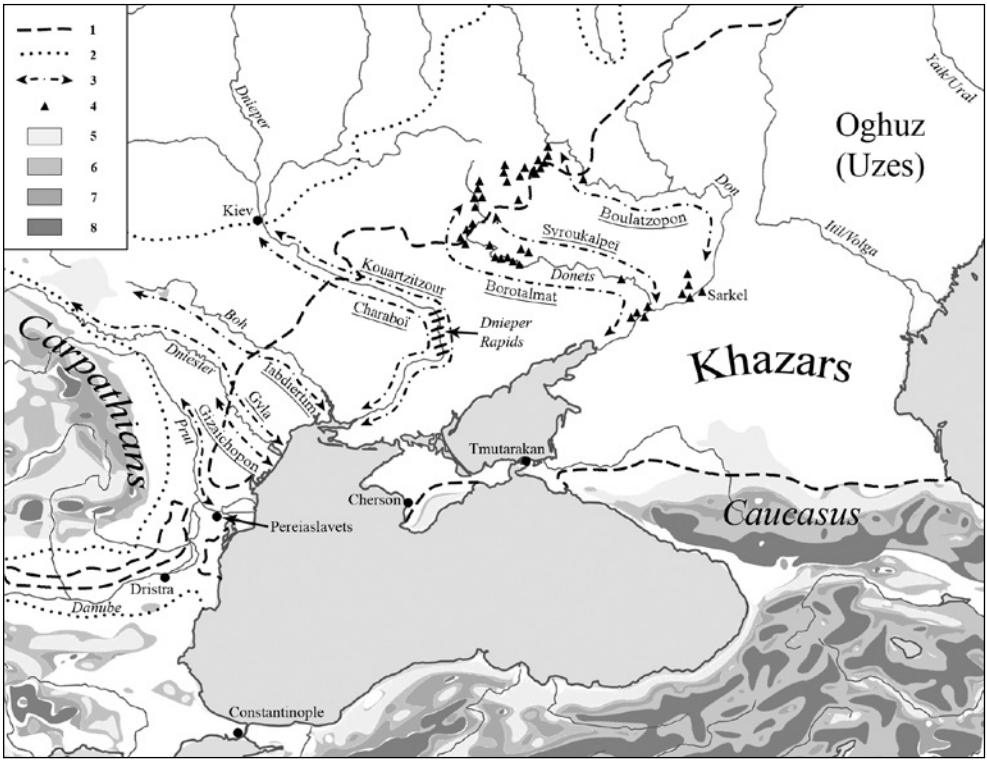

MAP 3 The Black Sea steppe in the Pecheneg Period, 1. Border of the steppe zone; 2. Border of the forest steppe zone; 3. Seasonal migrations of the Pecheneg tribal groups; 4. Saltovian hillforts and fortresses; 5.500–1000 m a.s.l.; 6. 1000–1500 m a.s.l.; 7. 500–2000 m a.s.l.; 8. Above 2000 m a.s.l.

5.2 Political Relations between the Pechenegs and Their Neighbours

Once the Pechenegs gained control of a large part of the Black Sea Steppe, the borders they shared with numerous powers of varying significance gave them the ability to play a pivotal role as a balancing force in regional affairs. Based on the factors discussed earlier in the chapter, it is clear that the Pechenegs faced significant hindrances to fully exploiting their favourable geopolitical position. The most important of these was the lack of a clearly established centre of power, which meant that the Pechenegs' behaviour in relations with the outside world sometimes involved impulsive behaviours, rather than deliberate political actions aimed at achieving some broader strategy. It is sometimes difficult to resist the impression that the role played by the Pechenegs in their external relations, although often significant, was mainly a negative one, i.e., a

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force posing a threat to neighbouring political powers. However, this perception seems to be an oversimplification.

The relationship best evidenced in the sources is that between the Pechenegs and the Byzantine Empire, a power that had a keen interest in developments on the Black Sea steppe. Initially, i.e., until the 970s, Crimea was the only place of contact between the nomads and the Byzantine Empire. The safety of Kherson and other Greek colonies on the southern shore of the peninsula depended on the quality of the relationship they maintained with the peoples who controlled their foreground. The city and *thema* of the same name were an important point from which Constantinople could observe the state of political relations north of the Empire's borders and provided a base for carrying out possible diplomatic action.[44] This situation is reflected in the writings of Constantine Porphyrogenitus.[45] However, the key importance of the Pechenegs became most evident in connection with Rus'-Byzantine relations. The Scandinavian founders of the Kievan state, before they were 'domesticated' and incorporated into the Byzantine Commonwealth, had long posed a potential threat to the Empire. This was particularly strongly demonstrated by the first Varangian invasion in 860.[46] It showed that Rus', using the waterway 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', could easily threatened Constantinople. This fact distinguished them from other barbarians, who were able to attack the capital of the Empire, but always reached its walls by land. Meanwhile, the Rus' were also capable of organizing a sea expedition. The safety of the capital city would decrease dramatically if the Kievan princes managed to establish settlements in Crimea. Evidence that they had made such attempts earlier can be found in one of the conditions of a treaty concluded in 944, in which Prince Igor pledged not to wage war on the peninsula.[47] Success in such an endeavour would create a permanent threat not only to Constantinople, but also to the northern coast of Anatolia, which was the economic and demographic backbone of the Empire.[48] This situation required that increasing priority be given to all political actions that could: 1) limit or completely halt Rus' invasions,

44 On the importance of Kherson for Byzantine politics in the Black Sea Steppe region: Wozniak 1979, 115–126; 1984, 301; Obolensky 1979, 123–133; 1993, 108–113; 1994, 7ff.; 1994a, 55–57; 2000, 171–177; Romanchuk 1993, 58–64; Shepard 1998a, 172–174; 2009, 429 et passim.

45 DAI, I 25–28 (p. 48/49); VII (p. 54/55).

46 Vasiliev 1946; Ostrogorski 1967, 202; Levchenko 1956, 43–90; Pashuto 1968, 57–88; Obolensky 1994a, 42–43; 2000, 182–184; Sacharov 1980, 48–82; Petrosian 1998, 41–43; Duczko 2004, 83–86.

47 PVL 1, AM 9453 (945), col. 50–51.

48 Ostrogorski 1967, 290; Browning 1992, 106; Treadgold 1997, 371–380; Laiou, Morrisson 2007, 43–49.

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2) keep the Rurikids' state as far away as possible from the northern shores of the Black Sea, 3) be used to keep Rus' in check from the Black Sea steppe side if they were to settle in the Crimea.

Ever since the Bulgarians settled there, the Balkan Peninsula, i.e., the region located between the lower Danube and the Balkan mountains, had become crucial to the interests of the Byzantine Empire.[49] The presence of a strong and independent state in the foreground of Constantinople (the Byzantine border fortress at Debeltos was eight days away from the capital of the Empire[50]) was a considerable challenge for the Empire, which was often forced to engage its forces in fights against enemies violating its borders to the east. The Christianization of the Bulgarians (865 or 866) during the reign of Boris-Michael and the subordination of the young church organization, despite its far-reaching autonomy, to the authorities in Constantinople (870), seemed to form the basis for long-term peaceful cooperation between the two states.[51] The rule of Simeon I (893–927) put an end to these overly optimistic expectations. Throughout most of his reign, the Byzantine Empire was forced to fiercely defend its territorial integrity and political primacy in the Balkans.[52] In such a situation, the inhabitants of the steppe could theoretically have been an important factor in counterbalancing the military power of Simeon's state. The Bulgarian ruler was probably also interested in, if not cooperating with the nomads, then at least in ensuring their neutrality in the event of a conflict with the Empire. The Pechenegs' taking control of the Black Sea steppe was therefore an event of great importance for both Constantinople and Preslav.

For Rus' and many East Slavic tribes the changes that took place on the Black Sea steppe initially had negative consequences. Their territories most likely became subject to armed incursions by their bellicose neighbours,[53] with the intensity of these attack probably exceeded those experienced by the Byzantine Empire. In the case of Rus', the Pecheneg encampments were located on the border of the forest steppe, close to the capital city of Kiev. Moreover, the settlements established by war-like nomads on the lower course

49 Generally on Bulgarian-Byzantine relations: Browning 1975, 48–78; 1989, 23–32; Giuzelev 1996, 219–236.

50 Browning 1991, 615–616; 1997, 102.

51 Ostrogorski 1967, 203–204; Browning 1975, 56; Wasilewski 1988, 52–53; Bozhilov, Giuzelev 1999, 183–186; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 32–36, 43–52.

52 On Byzantine-Bulgarian relations and the political concepts of the Bulgarian ruler: Zlatarski 1927, 278–500; Runciman 1930, 133–177; 1988, 81–101; Ostrogorski 1967, 221–222, 224–229; Browning 1975, 57–67; Bozhilov 1983; Fine 1983, 132–158; Bozhilov, Gjuzelev 1999, 239–270; Leszka 2011, 55–70; 2013; Marinow 2011, 155–190; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 81–148.

53 This seems to be evidenced by the migrations of Slavic tribes, especially the Tiverians and the Uliches, discussed in the first part of this chapter.

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of the Dnieper River created a significant impediment to both trade and military expansion by Rus'. Considering that one of the Rurikids' main motives for conquering Kiev and the territory of the Polans was most certainly the desire to control the longest possible section of the trade route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', the emergence of any obstacle limiting its use for trade was perceived by the Kievan rulers as an extremely undesirable circumstance.[54]

Little is known about the relationship between the Pechenegs and the Khazar Khaganate. There are few reasons to suppose that after the Pechenegs settled on the Black Sea steppe, relations between the recent enemies improved. It seems significant that Constantine Porphyrogenitus does not include the Pechenegs among the peoples likely to attack the Khazars.[55] Meanwhile, another source mentions the formation of an anti-Khazar coalition established by Constantinople's diplomats during the reign of the Khazar ruler Benjamin. The coalition launched an attack, but was defeated with the help of the Alans. The Pechenegs were supposedly part of this group.[56] It is difficult to date these events precisely. They probably took place in the late 9th or early 10th century.[57] Regardless of how the relationships between these two peoples developed, the continued existence and ultimate fall of the Khazar state was of great importance for the history of the Pechenegs.

54 On the importance of trade for the Rus' state: Pashuto 1968, 62ff; Shepard 1974a, 27. Sakharov 1980, 84–134; Litavrin 1992, 48; 1999, 442; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 118–120, 133; Szymański 1973, 119–123. Cf. also chapter 4.2 of this study.

55 Among the enemies of the Khazar were said to be the Alans, the Black Bulgars, and the Uzes. DAI, X–XII (p. 62–65). Cf. Huxley 1984, 79–80, 86–87; S. Runciman (1988, 115) assumed that the Pechenegs were not mentioned among the peoples capable of attacking the Khazars because an attack by them, according to the fears of Byzantine diplomats, could completely destroy the weakened Khaganate, which in turn, would have led to a political imbalance in the region. Such an explanation can hardly be considered satisfactory, since the enemies of the Khazars included the Uzes, who were as dangerous as the Pechenegs, if not more so. Recently, James Howard-Johnston recognized the Pechenegs as clients of the Khazars. Both in the period preceding and following their migration to the Black Sea steppe, they were likely to have been part of the Khazar system, as were the Kama Bulgars and the Magyars. However, the British researcher presents practically no evidence to support his thesis. Howard-Johnston 2000, 349–350, 355–356; 2007a, 183–186, 188–190, 191–192; 2007, 170, 172, 174.

56 Golb, Pritsak 1982, 112–115.

57 Cf. Golb, Pritsak 1982, 132–134 (Omelian Pritsak dates these events to 880–900). Cf. Golden 1972, 77; Noonan 1992a, 115; Zuckerman 1995, 254 (just before 921–922). The last researcher, based on a very similarly sounding fragment of al-Gardizī, considers the possibility that the above-mentioned Khazar source recorded one of many clashes typical of the steppe.

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5.3 The History of the Pechenegs before 945. At a Political Crossroads

The relationships between the nomads and their neighbours outlined above involved geopolitical factors that potentially could, but didn't necessarily have to, lead to an alliance or war. The Black Sea steppe in that period was an area where the interests of neighbouring countries intersected, a fact which naturally increased the importance of the nomads who ruled over it. The nature of the Pechenegs' political organization and some elements of their culture may have discouraged political powers potentially interested in an alliance with them. Moreover, their arrival in the Black Sea region had been extremely violent. The Magyars who were banished from Etelköz were not the only one who experienced its dramatic consequences. The Pechenegs' raids, the main motive of which was most likely the desire to compensate for the material losses they had suffered during their clashes with the Khazars and Uzes, not only negatively impacted the East Slavic tribes, for they also affected the Kherson *thema* as well. Although no available source provides information on when and under what circumstances the nomads invaded the southern Crimean colonies of the Byzantine Empire, their wealth was probably a significant factor in motivating the nomads to attack. The claims of Constantine Porphyrogenitus contained in the first chapter of *De administrando imperio* were most likely based on concrete historical observations and cannot be treated as purely theoretical digressions.[58] These expeditions may have brought significant material benefits to the Pechenegs, but they must have had a deeply negative impact on the quality of the relations between the nomads and the Byzantine Empire.

Apart from the attacks on Kherson, mutual distrust and hostility also resulted from a series of events that led to the arrival of the Pechenegs on the Black Sea steppe. We need to remember that their victory over the Magyars was achieved in alliance with the Bulgarian ruler Simeon I.[59] With the help of the Pechenegs, he rid himself of troublesome neighbours who threatened his country from the north, which allowed him to defeat the Byzantine Empire at Boulgarofygon (896) and bring the war the two had been waging since 894 to a victorious end.[60] The warring ruler's later contacts with the Pechenegs are unclear. It is not impossible that these relations were friendly for some time. According to Constantine's accounts, the Bulgarians, fearing nomad invasions,

58 DAI, I 25–28 (p. 48/49).

59 Cf. Chapter 3 of the present book.

60 Leszka 2011, 64; 2013, 76–95.

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tried to maintain a peace with them.[61] This very general statement, however, does not give us sufficient grounds to assume the existence of a permanent alliance between Bulgaria and the Pechenegs. The events of the second decade of the 10th century, when the nomads decided to enter into a short-term military alliance with the Byzantine Empire, also raise doubts.[62] The thesis that the Pechenegs occupied the lands north of the Danube with the consent of Bulgaria as its *foederati* is nothing but pure speculation.[63] The concept of close relations existing between these two peoples based on ethnic affinities is even less likely. Even if the Pechenegs spoke Turkic, a language close to Old Bulgarian, the formerly nomadic Bulgar elites had already undergone a far-reaching process of Slavicization and acculturation in the early-10th century. Thus, between the Bulgarians and the Pechenegs there were many more differences than similarities, especially after the Christianization of the former. Linguistic or cultural similarities, especially in that period, by no means determined the political choices of individual rulers or the communities they represented. In view of the reservations above, one should be very sceptical about the view shared especially by some Bulgarian historians about the existence of a strong and lasting Bulgarian-Pecheneg alliance.[64]

This does not change the fact, however, that cooperation, though probably quite short-lived, between the nomads and Simeon I during the 890s weakened the Byzantine Empire. Tensions in Bulgarian-Byzantine relations continued throughout the decade, with the conflict finally ending in 904. It cannot be ruled out that Simeon used the invasion of the Arab pirates led by Leo of Tripoli and Damian of Tarsus on Thessaloniki as an opportunity to impose advantageous changes in the border on the Byzantine Empire. Some researchers assume that the Bulgarian ruler incorporated part of the *thema* of Thessalonica into his country. Henceforth, the Bulgarian-Byzantine border would run just 22 kilometres north of this provincial capital.[65]

61 DAI V 10–13 (p. 52/53). However, Constantine's statement is unclear; it can be concluded that periods of peace were interrupted by fighting between the Bulgarians and the Pechenegs. The Emperor clearly states that the Bulgarians 'were sorely defeated by the steppe people many times (πολλάκις ὑπ' αὐτῶν καταπολεμηθῆναι).'

62 See below.

63 Tăpkova-Zaimova 1970, 71–72; Mladjov 1998, 95–96.

64 Bozhilov 1973, 52–53, 61; 1983, 123–124 (the researcher suggests that the Bulgarian-Pecheneg alliance in the times of Simeon was most likely strengthened by marriages between representatives of the elites of both peoples); Dimitrov 2011, 205–210.

65 Zlatarski 1927, 321–342; Ostrogorski 1967, 222; Runciman 1930, 151–2; Wasilewski 1972, 225–226; Browning 1975, 61; Bozhilov, Giuzelev 1999, 249; Stephenson 2000, 21; Leszka 2013, 100–115 (for a more careful stance).

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The events of 894–904 clearly showed that political relations between Constantinople and Preslav were far from harmonious, which was far from what one would have expected after the Christianization of Bulgaria. Moreover, the agreement reached in the early 10th century offered no guarantee that a new phase in their conflicts and rivalry would not soon begin. The conquest of the Black Sea steppe by the Pechenegs must therefore have been seen by Byzantine diplomats as an extremely unfavourable occurrence, as it deprived them of an ally in the event of subsequent clashes with Simeon I.

In hopes of strengthening its position in its contacts with Bulgaria, as well as of limiting the political significance of the new neighbours of its southern Crimean colonies, the court in Constantinople decided to resort to a diplomatic ploy, described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus and carried out by an unknown cleric named Gabriel. The Byzantine emissary is said to have called on the Magyars to attack the Pechenegs and drive them from their new home on the Black Sea steppe. After recovering these lands, the Magyars would be in close proximity to the imperial court, which would enable faster and better contacts, allowing Constantinople to more easily delegate political tasks to the Magyars.[66] The manner in which Byzantine diplomatic sources referred to their ally, or rather, judging from their tone, their political underling, is quite puzzling. It seems to prove that the Magyars were not perceived by them as an independent ethnos.[67] However, establishing the approximate date of this mission is more crucial. The outstanding Hungarian Byzantinist Gyula Moravcsik assumed that it took place around 927, i.e., at the time of the peace treaty with Bulgaria.[68] It would indeed seem that after Simeon's death, when, under the reign of Tsar Peter I, Bulgaria ceased its previous political expansion, Byzantium would be able to exercise greater influence over the political situation in the area north of the Black Sea. The sole aim of the cleric Gabriel's trip, therefore, according to Moravcsik's interpretation, would have been to curb the Pechenegs, because Bulgaria had already ceased to pose a threat.[69] It seems, however, that the diplomatic move described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus would have been more justified earlier on.[70] At that time, Byzantium would

66 DAI, VIII 23–33 (p. 56/7).

67 Cf. Moravcsik 1970, 54.

68 Moravcsik 1970, s. 54; DAI-Com., 16. Moravcisk's dating is also accepted by: Obolensky 2000, 155; Litavrin, Novosel'tsev 1989, 290 (note 8); Shepard 1995, 111; 1999a, 270. Runciman (1988, 108 (note 3)) proposed an even later dating for the Gabriel's mission (948).

69 On Bulgaria during this period of Peter's rule: Runciman 1930, 177–202; Zlatarski 1927, 516–590; Browning 1975, 67–72; Fine 1978, 88–95; 1983, 159–179; Bozhilov, Gjuzelev 1999, 271–307; Stephenson 2000, 23–25; Leszka, Marinow 2018.

70 Cf. Bury 1906, 567. The author dates Gabriel's mission to the years 898–906.

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either have found itself in a fierce rivalry with Simeon or have faced the danger of the imminent resumption of one. The treaty of 904 thus may have been seen in Constantinople as merely a temporary solution. Moreover, the shifts in the border dictated by the treaty made it easier for the Bulgarians, in the event of the outbreak of a new armed conflict, to take effective offensive action.

The Empire must therefore have been particularly committed to seeking a strong ally against Simeon in the last phase of its conflict with Bulgaria, and even shortly afterwards, if we assume that the 904 treaty was regarded by Constantinople's diplomacy as merely a momentary cessation of hostilities. An additional factor that may have raised the Byzantine administration's awareness of the negative effects of the Magyars' absence on the Black Sea steppe was a Rus' invasion dated to 907.[71] The reconquest of the Black Sea steppe by the Magyars would have provided Constantinople with an ally capable of stopping the aggression of the Rus'.

Finally, the vigorous and very emotional reaction to the imperial order from the Magyars, who sent a threatening warning to a Byzantine diplomat, indicate they still clearly remembered the devastation the Pechenegs had inflicted on them.[72] All of these issues seem to indicate that the cleric Gabriel's mission took place during the reign of Leo VI the Wise, in the late 9th century or the first decade of the 10th century.

This diplomatic failure and the outbreak of a new war with Bulgaria forced the court in Constantinople to attempt to establish some form of cooperation with the Pechenegs. This time the *casus belli* according to Simeon I was the refusal of Emperor Alexander I to pay the tribute guaranteed by earlier agreements.[73] The situation in Byzantium was further complicated by the imminent death of the emperor (June 913) and the fact that the regency council, initially led by Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos, assumed power in the name of the young Constantine VII. Mystikos supported a policy of reconciliation with the Bulgarian monarch, who soon arrived to Constantinople with his armies (August 913). An agreement was concluded that gave Simeon the title of *basileus* of the Bulgarians and called for the marriage of his daughter to the

71 PVL 1, AM 6415 (907), col. 29–32. Cf. Jenkins 1949, 403–406; Sakharov 1980, 84–104; Obolensky 2000, 184–5; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 103–105.

72 DAI, VIII 29–33 (p. 56).

73 According to most sources, Simeon only demanded confirmation of the conditions of the already existing peace, which Alexander I recklessly rejected. The only author who mentions tribute being paid to the Bulgarians is John Skylitzes. Th.Cont., 380; LeoGramm., 287; Sym.Magist., 134.8 (p. 296–297); Io.Scyl., 195; Wortley 2010, p. 190. Cf. Ostrogorski 1967, 225; Runciman 1988, 46; Leszka 2013, 118–123; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 100–107.

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young Constantine.[74] The terms of the agreement, especially the planned marriage aroused strong opposition from some Byzantine elites, who gathered around Empress Zoe Karbonopsina, widow of Leo VI and the young emperor's mother. Eventually, the arrangements made by Nicholas Mystikos were disavowed and his role in the Regency Council was limited. This placed the Empire once again on a path to military confrontation with Bulgaria, especially given that Simeon I had taken military action against the Empire upon hearing that the treaty had been broken. Zoe and her circle are said to have responded with military operations by a coalition composed of Byzantium and its allies, including the Pechenegs.[75] The person responsible for the alliance with the nomads was John Bogas, the *strategos* of the Kherson *thema*. He pledged, in exchange for the title of Patrician, to persuade the Pechenegs to take military action against Simeon I. With the required customary gifts in hand, the Kherson *strategos* travelled to the various Pecheneg tribes and reached an arrangement with them.[76] The brief mentions by Byzantine chroniclers seem to indicate that this mission was not a difficult one. In particular, the regular pattern in the delivery of gifts suggests that Bogas' actions were considered part of a diplomatic routine. However, events most likely took a completely different turn. Correspondence between Nicholas Mystikos and Simeon I, provides us with cause to take a closer look at the circumstances in which the agreement with the Pechenegs was concluded. A letter written

74 The first provision of the agreement is universally accepted in modern scholarship, while the second one raises doubts. For the traditional position (the 913 agreement included both provisions): Ostrogorski 1967, 226; Browning 1975, 62; Runciman 1930, 156–157; 1988, 51; Treadgold 1997, 473; Stephenson 2000, 22; Cheynet 2006, 28. Criticism: Leszka 2013, 142–146; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 108–111.

75 Zlatarski 1927, 374–380; Ostrogorski 1967, 226; Runciman 1930, 158–159; Bozhilov 1983, 120–125; Treadgold 1997, 473–475. This traditional perception of the events is contrasted with another one, according to which Simeon did not act as the aggressor. The provisions of the 913 agreement fully satisfied him and were in no way violated by the Byzantine side. The latter, however, decided to break the peace treaty by undertaking military action in 917. Cf. Shepard 2011, 34–45; Leszka 2013, 160–176; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 118–121. However, such a version of events raises doubts. First of all, it poorly explains the reasons why Nicholas Mystikos lost his influence to Zoe Karbonopsina. It seems that the reason the Patriarch was banished to the political periphery was his concessions, which must have gone further than merely accepting the title of "Basileus of the Bulgarians" granted to Simeon. Secondly, the reasons that led the Byzantine court to take aggressive action against the Bulgarian monarch are unclear. If the latter had not undertaken any armed actions, it seems unreasonable for Constantinople to have dispatched a complicated and probably very expensive war expedition to the Balkans.

76 Th.Cont., 387; Georg.Mon., 879; LeoGramm., 293; Sym.Magist., 135.14 (pp. 302–303); Io.Scyl., 201–202; Wortley 2010, 196.

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by Nicholas to Simeon I shortly after the Battle of Anchialos, which had been catastrophic for the Empire (20 August 917) clearly shows that in the period preceding the clash, the nomads had been the target of diplomatic efforts by the Bulgarian ruler. The *strategos* of the Kherson *thema* reported that the Pechenegs informed him many times about proposals for an alliance from Bulgaria. Simeon's subjects were ready to secure such an alliance through marriages, which seems to indicate how important such a union was to them.[77] Ultimately, however, the Byzantine side gained the upper hand.

The Patriarch's letter contains additional facts worth noting here. First, the head of the Byzantine Church shows a clear reluctance towards the arrangement between the Pechenegs and its executor.[78] The tone of Nicholas Mystikos' description of Bogas' actions suggests he felt a need to justify them. According to his account, Constantinople agreed to negotiate with the Pechenegs only because it had learned about the earlier actions of Bulgarian diplomats. The diplomatic efforts of the Byzantine court were therefore defensive in nature.[79] However, this does not change the fact that the Patriarch considered the agreement with the nomads to be wrong, exacerbating a great injustice, that is, the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict itself.[80] This observation seems to explain to some extent the attitudes of some Byzantine elites of that period. Perhaps it constitutes an additional explanation as to why the agreement with the Pechenegs was not consumed at the decisive moment.[81] Nicholas Mystikos also mentions the arrival of some 16 Pechenegs in Constantinople, who also reported on the actions of Simeon's diplomats.[82] This mention is particularly interesting. A problem worth considering here is who organized the visit of the nomads to the capital of the Empire. In other words, was it initiated by the Pecheneg elites or by the *strategos* of the Kherson *thema*. In the light of available source data, both options seem equally possible. However, it should be noted that the nomads benefited greatly from the diplomatic rivalry between the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria. It is therefore not unlikely that it was their decision to inform the imperial court of the intentions of the Bulgarian ruler,

77 Nic.Mist., Ep. 9, p. 58 (v. 98–112); Cf. Malamut 1995, 107–108.

78 Nic.Mist., Ep. 9, p. 60 (v. 148). The Patriarch calls Bogas and the Pecheneg emissaries wretches (ἀθλίοι ἀνθρώποι).

79 Nic.Myst., Ep. 9, pp. 60, 62 (v. 142–152).

80 Nic.Myst., Ep. 9, p. 62 (v. 163–172). Cf. Nic.Myst., Ep. 183, p. 514 (v. 22–26).

81 Cf. interesting observations by Mirosław J. Leszka concerning the views of Nicholas Mystikos and Theodore Dafnopates (a.k.a. Romanos Lekapenos) on the spilling of Christian blood and the use of pagans in the fight against Christians. The latter is supposed to have been a manifestation of the greatest evil. Turning to pagans for help is allowed only in extraordinary cases (a threat to one's independence). Leszka 2006, 14; 2008, 36–38.

82 Nic.Myst., Ep. 9, p. 58 (v. 105–107).

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with the aim of initiating a kind of political bidding war.[83] The Kherson *strategos* most likely merely acted as an intermediary.

Bogas' mission, or rather his negotiations, should be dated between summer or early autumn of 914 and mid-917. It was part of much broader preparations for a military offensive against the Bulgarians. The Magyars and Serbs also became objects of Constantinople's diplomatic efforts.[84] Zoe Karbonopsina also decided to enter into a peace agreement with the Arabs, as she sought to move more troops from the eastern border. These forces, supported by the armies of the West, were supposed to attack Simeon.[85] After long preparations during the summer of 917, Byzantine troops led by Leo Phokas finally entered into enemy territory and moved north along the Black Sea coast. The second part of the plan was to move the Pechenegs across the Danube. This task was assigned to Romanos Lekapenos, the great *droungarios* of the fleet. The nomads were to link up with the main Byzantine forces and join the fight against the Bulgarians. However, such a coordinated action never took place. According to Byzantine sources, the Pechenegs could not complete this task due to misunderstandings between Lekapenos and John Bogas. Due to this conflict, the nomads returned to their homes without engaging in combat.[86] Blame for this course of events fell on the *droungarios* of the fleet, who refused to carry out orders. The reason for his behaviour may have been his distrust of the Empire's newly recruited ally.[87] However, political rivalry was an equally important motivation. It cannot be ruled out that Lekapenos had initiated a risky gambit aimed at discrediting the regent's current policy. He may have assumed that the failure of the 917 campaign would undermine the power of Zoe and her political clients.[88]

The reason for the Pechenegs' withdraw, however, was not likely to have been some other sub-group of the nomads allying itself with Simeon. Some researchers have suggested that the nomads, bound by an alliance with Byzantium, retreated in order to avoid a fratricidal war once they learned that kindred nomads were fighting on the Bulgarian side. Pechenegs who had

83 Cf. Malamut 1995, 108.

84 DAI, XXXII 86–91 (p. 156); Cf. Bozhilov 1983, 122–123; Leszka 2013, 169; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 121–122.

85 Th.Cont., 388; Georg.Mon., 880–881; Sym.Magist., 135.18 (p. 304); LeoGramm., 294; Io.Scyl., 202–203; Wortley 2010, 197.

86 Th.Cont., 389–390; Georg.Mon., 882; Sym.Magist., 135.21 (p. 305); LeoGramm., 295–296; Io.Scyl., 204; Wortley 2010, 198–199.

87 Cf. above, Nicholas Mystikos's clear objections to cooperation with the Pechenegs.

88 The struggle between political factions as a reason for the failure of the Byzantine campaign of 917 clearly appears in the narrative of Leo the Deacon, who was writing more than half a century later. LeoDiac., VII 7 (pp. 122–124); Talbot, Sullivan 2005, 170–172.

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chosen to ally themselves with Simeon I are said to have stood by him and supported his forces at Anchialos.[89] This interpretation is not very convincing. It seems unlikely that Byzantine sources were unaware of the fact that during the 917 campaign a significant number of Pechenegs fought on the side of the Bulgarian monarch. While such a lack of knowledge might have been true for the chroniclers, the same cannot be said of the well-informed Nicholas Mystikos, who lived at the time of these events. If he had considered it necessary to explain the reasons and circumstances behind the formation of a Pecheneg-Byzantine alliance, it is difficult to imagine that he would not have pointed to and criticized Simeon's actions. The presence of the Pechenegs in his ranks would have, after all, bolstered the concerns of Zoe and her followers, which were given as the official justification for the alliance with the nomads.

The source data referred to by researchers who claim that a group of nomads entered into an alliance with Bulgaria does not provide sufficient grounds to support their thesis. The rebellion (ἐπανάστασις)[90] mentioned in *The Martyrdom and Miracles of St. George of Cappadocia*, which western barbarians were said to have launched against the Byzantine Empire, among which the Bulgarians (Βούλγαροι), were mentioned, does not have to be identified with the events that culminated in the Battle of Anchialos. The ethnonyms of the barbarian coalition partners are particularly difficult to interpret. Apart from the Bulgarians, the author of the biography also mentions the Ungroi (Οὔγγροι, perhaps Magyars), Scythians (Σκύθαι), Medes (Μῆδοι) and Turks (Τοῦρκοι). These archaic ethnonyms leave much room for interpretation. Only the *a priori* assumption that the Pechenegs were among them allows us to link them to the Scythians mentioned by the text's author. However, such an assumption cannot be considered methodologically valid. The supporters of the Bulgarian-Pecheneg alliance also refer to al- Masʿūdī's account of the invasion of the Walandar fortress by four barbarian peoples. The claims of the Arab historian will be addressed below. Here it is worth stating merely that considering the description of the Battle of Walandar and the siege and conquest of that fortress to be the same as the events described as part of the Battle of Anchialos in August 917 faces two obstacles, which in my opinion are impossible to overcome. First, none of the four peoples mentioned by Masʿūdī can be identified as the Bulgarians. The only researcher who had made an attempt to

89 Bozhilov 1973, 46–52; 1983, 124. Ivan Bozhilov's interpretation has gained some recognition: Dimitrov 2011, 198–205; Marinow 2007, 384; Leszka 2013, 171–173. However, the positions of both Polish researchers are much more cautious.

90 Miracula, 20–1.

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do so was Carlile A. Macartney.[91] His identification, however, has been rejected by scholars. The second is related to chronology. Mas'ūdī claims that the events he described occurred in the year 932 or later. The participation of the Magyars means the year was 934, when their invasion (also known from Byzantine sources) reached the walls of Constantinople (this fact was also noted by the Arab historian). An additional fact that confirms the above dating of the Battle of Walandar is an indication that the Emperor of Rome (ar-Rūm) was then someone named 'Armanos.' He should be identified as Romanos I Lekapenos, whose reign, as we know, began only in 920.[92]

Therefore, during the 917 campaign, the Pechenegs ultimately did not support any sides in the conflict, which to a large extent determined the Byzantine Empire's defeat. On 20 August, Leo Phokas' army was completely destroyed in the Battle of Anchialos. After this defeat, another, at Katasyrtai, near Constantinople, soon followed. The Empire was no longer able to defend itself, which was eagerly exploited by Simeon. A year later he invaded northern Greece and reached the Gulf of Corinth during a looting expedition.[93]

Romanos Lekapenos' risky political manoeuvring out him in great danger. At one point, he even faced the risk of having his eyes put out. It was only through the intervention of Magister Stephen and Patrician Constantine Gongyles, two people with significant influence over Zoe, that he managed to avoid such a punishment.[94] Meanwhile, the days of the regent's power were numbered. Her downfall finally came about in the spring of 919. Romanos Lekapenos became the new regent with the title of *basileopator*, which he soon changed to *kaisar* (Caesar), and on 17 December 920, his son-in-law Constantine VII elevated him to the position of co-emperor.[95]

The first Pecheneg-Byzantine agreement recorded in sources proved to be short-lived, and its provisions were never implemented. Romanos I Lekapenos, who was largely responsible for breaking the alliance of 917, did not assign the Pechenegs a significant place in the system of Byzantine alliances. Ideas on how to make use of the steppe people during the prolonged conflict with Simeon

91 Macartney 1930, 162. Cf. below.

92 Cf. below.

93 Zlatarski 1927, 385–392; Runciman 1930, 160–162; 1988, 161–163; Ostrogorski 1967, 226; Treadgold 1997, 475; Leszka 2013, 177–180, 182–185, 188–190. The last scholar is seemingly rightly inclined towards a more nuanced assessment of the Battle of Katasyrtai. It was not a failure for the Byzantine armies; they suffered serious losses (the death of one of the commanders), but they stopped the advance of the Bulgarians.

94 Th.Cont., 390; Georg.Mon., 882; LeoGramm., 296; Sym.Magist., 135.22 (pp. 305–306); Io.Scyl., 204–205; Wortley 2010, 199. Cf. Runciman 1988, 56.

95 Io.Scyl., 209, 212; Wortley 2010, 202, 205. Cf. Ostrogorski 1967, 228; Runciman 1988, 58–62.

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were most likely put forth by those around the emperor. This is evidenced by information contained in another letter from Nicholas Mystikos, dated 922, to the ruler of Bulgaria. The Patriarch calls for a cessation of fighting, threatening otherwise to form an anti-Bulgarian coalition under the patronage of Constantinople. This coalition was to comprise various 'Scythian' peoples, i.e., the Pechenegs, Rus', Magyars and Alans.[96] The tone of the letter, which sounded like a reprimand and a call for improvement, and, as the author makes clear, to work in concert with the court in Constantinople, leads us to the conclusion that the idea of a vast alliance against Bulgaria was more of a diplomatic bluff than a real threat.[97] Moreover, it would seem unwise to have informed Simeon about the real plans of the Byzantine court, as it could have led to diplomatic moves on his part to thwart them. What is more, the Pechenegs are portrayed here as one of several possible partners of the Empire, and not as the main one. Thus, it seems that the Pechenegs did not play a major role in the political plans of Constantinople, not only until the death of Simeon, which ended the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict, but almost to the end of Romanos I Lekapenos' reign. There is also nothing to indicate the existence of any particularly close relations between Preslav and the nomads. On the contrary, it would seem that the strong involvement of Simeon's Bulgaria in the Balkans could even have resulted in losing its political influence in the Danube areas to the Pechenegs.[98]

Events connected with the mission of John Bogas can be considered evidence of a change in the attitude of the Pechenegs towards the population of Kherson. It is difficult to determine whether their trade contacts, well documented in *De administrando imperio* in the mid-10th century,[99] led to an attempt at political cooperation. However, this seems quite likely. Plans for a political alliance were made in response to Simeon's previously described diplomatic activity, which indicates that no such relationship had existed earlier between the nomads and Byzantium. This attempt at political cooperation could have been facilitated by the trade ties that existed between the two sides. They were most likely also the source of the knowledge possessed by the Kherson *strategos* about the efforts of Bulgarian diplomats. The failure of the Byzantine-Pecheneg alliance, however, did not necessarily end the economic cooperation between the inhabitants of the *thema* with their steppe neighbours.

96 Nic.Myst., Ep. 23, p. 158 (v. 15–21), 160 (v. 66–72).

97 Bozhilov 1983, 139; Dimitrov 2011, 206; Shepard 1998, 29.

98 Cf. Runciman 1930, 150; Browning 1975, 68; Treadgold 1997, 479. Cf. also the considerations in the first part of this chapter.

99 Cf. Chapter 4.2 of the present book.

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The relationship between the Slavic peoples and the Pechenegs had a difficult start as well. There is a number of reasons to suppose that Pecheneg looting raids affected their northern neighbours particularly severely. In delineating the borders of Patzinacia, we could notice that almost all the Eastern Slavic tribes who were adjacent to the steppe were forced to move their residences to the forest zone, which provided greater protection against attacks by the nomads. The range of the Pechenegs' armed penetrations sometimes extended past the northern border of forest steppe, which proves that even there the Slavs did not enjoy a complete state of peace. The situation was particularly unfavourable for the Uliches and Tiverians, who, due to their close proximity to other Slavic tribes, could not leave the forest-steppe zone completely, and thus faced a permanent threat from their bellicose neighbours. It seems, however, that over time, the Slavs were able to find a *modus vivendi* with the nomads. A flexible tribute payment policy most likely helped them to establish a more peaceful relationship. A sign of these relations can be found in Chapter Two of *De administrando imperio*, according to which the inhabitants of Rus' bought sheep, horses and cattle from the Pechenegs.[100] A statement by Witold Hensel was quoted above;[101] according to him the trade in goods described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus was mostly beneficial for the nomads, which makes it a form of tribute.[102] This was most likely one of the ways the Pechenegs' attacks were limited, which could have brought at least a partial normalization to their relations.[103]

Another factor limiting the Pechenegs' aggression was the Rus' political organism, although it was still in a nascent state. The Varangians constituted a military counterbalance to the warrior steppe people. The Rus' princes only began to settle permanently in the area of the middle Dnieper at the end of the first third of the 10th century; however, this does not change the fact that they most likely had been interested in this area since well before this time. The Rus' gradually filled the place once occupied by the Khazar Khaganate, assuming control of the eastern Slavic tribes. The Ledzanians, Uliches, and Derevlians were all described as tributaries of the Rus' state in *De administrando imperio*. This seems to indicate that the Rus' domination could have provided some form of protection against potential aggression by the Pechenegs.[104]

100 DAI, II 5–8 (pp. 48–51).

101 Cf. Chapter 4 (section 2) of the present book.

102 Hensel 1987, 113, 688.

103 Cf. Łowmiański 1973, 126–127.

104 DAI, XXXVII 43–45 (p. 168/169). Cf. Franklin, Shepard 1996, 97–98, 110, 121–130; Duczko 2004, 217–225.

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The expansion of control over the eastern Slavic tribes and the trade routes running toward the Byzantine Empire therefore had to lead to a rivalry between the Rus' and the Pechenegs. Evidence of the existence of such a rivalry can be found in Rus' chronicles. Judging from these records, this conflict was initially not particularly fierce, but then, they note, around the year 915:

> The Pechenegs entered the land of Rus' for the first time, but when they made peace with Igor', they went their way to the Danube.[105]

This is followed by a description of a military expedition organized against Simeon which ended in failure due to mistakes made by the Byzantine commanders. The combination of these two events seems to prove that the aforementioned expedition by the nomads was a preventive measure, aimed at securing the Pechenegs' home base from a counterattack by Igor while their forces were away fighting on Bulgarian territory. The latter fact would seem to indicate that the date of the Pecheneg expedition against the Rus' should be changed to 917. Their actions provide evidence that, contrary to the chroniclers' accounts, the nomads had been at war with the Rus' Prince for some time. It is not clear at what date these hostilities began. It is likely that the Pechenegs attacked Rus' around 914, when a part of the Rus' forces were on a looting expedition along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea.[106] The short period of time separating the two events would justify the nomads' fears that the Rus' ruler would use their temporary vulnerability to organize a retaliatory expedition against them for the harm they had recently inflicted upon his people.

The next clashes probably took place around 920. This time the mention in the chronicles is even more laconic:

> Romanus was set up as Emperor in Greece. Igor' waged war against the Pechenegs.[107]

105 PVL 1, AM 6423 (915), col. 42–43; Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 71.

106 The date of this expedition has been a subject of controversy. Masʿūdī states that it took place after 300 Hijra (912–913 of the Christian era); he forgot the exact date. The Rus' seized ample loot, half of which, according to an earlier agreement, was given to the Khazar ruler. On their way back, however, after passing through the Volga estuary, they were attacked by Muslim mercenaries of the khagan, and then by the Burtas and Bulgars of the Volga. Most of the Varangians were murdered. al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 18–24; Pellat 1962, 165–167; Dunlop 1954, 209–212. Cf. Łowmiański 1973, 197; PVL 2, 282; Novosel'tsev 1990, 212–213; Zuckerman 1995, 256.

107 PVL 1, AM 6428 (920), col. 43; Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 71.

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It is difficult to deduce from this passage – assuming the information contained in it is reliable – who was acting here as the aggressor. It was possibly the Rus' prince.[108] If this was the case, it is still difficult to say what motivated Igor to take military action against the steppe people. Accepting the standard hypothesis that this was a punitive expedition presupposes that it was preceded by some kind of Pecheneg provocation. It is also quite probable that it did not take place on Rus' territory, but somewhere along the part of the Dnieper trade route controlled by the nomads. The fighting mentioned above could also have been a consequence of Rus' activity on this waterway that was either seen as undesirable by the Pechenegs or which had not previously been negotiated with them.

For nearly half a century, i.e., until 968, the sources remain silent about the armed actions taken by the nomads against the Rus'. It would be extremely risky, however, to conclude that relations between the Pechenegs and Kiev were perfectly peaceful during that time. Confrontations provoked by both sides most likely took place. Their frequency and intensity, however, was clearly not high. The proximity of the territories of the Rus' and Pechenegs would not have been so close (only a day's journey in the times of Constantine VII) if a fierce rivalry had continued to exist between the two political powers. However, the establishment of settlements along the middle course of the Dnieper could have led to a violation of the borders of the spring and summer encampments of the Pechenegs located in the forest-steppe zone. Such a situation would clearly have provoked conflicts. This was also the case in terms of Pecheneg looting raids on lands inhabited by tributaries of Kiev or merchants active on the Dnieper route. Events of this kind most likely also took place and weighed on the quality of the relations between the steppe-dwellers and Rus'. Nevertheless, their importance was not sufficient to leave a trace in written sources. Moreover, short-term armed conflicts did not necessarily exclude the possibility of temporary cooperation. It is hard to imagine that the Rurikids could lead a four-month expedition against Byzantium in 941 without ensuring at least the benevolent neutrality of the nomads beforehand. Three years later, Igor even managed to persuade the Pechenegs to engage in military cooperation against Constantinople.[109]

Before this happened, however, the Pechenegs were said to have joined forces with another political partner in order to stand up militarily against the Empire. These events, dated to 934, were described by al-Masʿūdī. In Chapter 17 of *Meadows of Gold* he writes:

108 A similar interpretation is adopted by S.A. Pletneva (1958, 215).

109 Cf. below.

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We will therefore return to the account of the nations which live in the neighbourhood of Bab el-Abwab, the wall, the Caucasus, the country of the Khazar, and the Alans. On the frontiers of the Khazar towards the west, live four Turkish nations, which derive their origin from the same forefather. Some of them are settled, whilst others are nomads. They are all brave and can resist any nation.[110] Each of them has its own king, whose dominions have an extent of several days, and they are contiguous to each other. Some of them are on the Pontus. They extend their predatory excursions as far as Rome which is in the direction towards Spain.[111] They are victorious over all the nations who live there. Between the king of the Khazar and the lord of Alan a friendship exists.[112] They are immediate neighbours of the former. The first of these nations has the name Bajna. The second is called Bajghird the next following nation is called Bajnāk, and is the bravest of the four. The fourth is called Nūkardah. Their kings have sovereign power, they had wars with the Byzantines after the year 320 A.H. or in that year.[113] The Byzantines have, on the frontiers towards these four nations, a large Greek city which is called Walandar which has a great population (garrison), and is protected by the sea on one side, and by mountains on the other. The inhabitants (garrison) of this town defended the country against the invasions of the before mentioned four Turkish nations, and they were unable to penetrate into the country of the Byzantines, being precluded by mountains, the sea, and this town. These four nations have been at war with each other, on account of a dispute respecting a Muslim merchant of Ardabīl, who, although he enjoyed the protection of hospitality of one of these nations, was injured by another. This gave rise to disunion. The Byzantines of Walandar took advantage of it, invaded their country whilst they were disunited; they took many of their children prisoners, and plundered their property. When they heard of this, as they were occupied in their war, they united under one commander, proclaimed a mutual amnesty, remitting blood

110 Cf. de Meynard and de Courteille (al-Masʿūdī, Les Prairies, II, 58): Elles sont puissantes et belliqueuses; Douglas Morton Dunlop (1954, 212): They […] are difficult of approach and very courageous.

111 Cf. de Meynard and de Courteille (al-Masʿūdī, Les Prairies, II, 58): Elles poussent leur excursions jusque sur les terres de Roum et les provinces voisines de l'Espagne; Dunlop (1954, 212): Their raids extend to the lands of Rome and almost as far as Spain.

112 Cf. de Meynard and de Courteille (al-Masʿūdī, Les Prairies, II, 58–59): […] ells vivent en paix avec le roi des Khazars, […], et avec le roi des Alans; Dunlop (1954, 212): Between them and the king of the Khazars is a truce, and so with the ruler of the Alans.

113 Cf. de Meynard and de Courteille (al-Masʿūdī, Les Prairies, II, 59; Pellat 1962, 178): durant l'année 320, ou peu aprés.

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> revenge; and the whole nation, about sixty thousand horse strong,[114] at once repaired to the town of Walandar, and this without being called out, and without collecting the men. If they had called out their men, they would have mustered about one hundred thousand horsemen. When Romanus who is the present emperor of the Byzantines, that is to say, in 332 AH, had received intelligence, he sent against them twelve thousand (Arabic) horsemen who had embraced the Christian religion, with spears in the Arabic costume and fifty thousand Byzantines. They came in eight days to the town of Walandar encamped beyond the town, and took (partly) their quarters in the houses of the inhabitants. The Turks had already killed a vast number of the population of Walandar, but they defended themselves with their walls till this reinforcement reached them. When the four kings had observed that their enemies had received the aid of those (Arabs) who had turned Christians, and of the Byzantines, they sent unto their own country, which lies towards the country of the Khazar, Alans, Bab el-Abwab, and others, and collected the Muslim population who did not enlist except in wars against unbelievers. When the two armies had drawn up in battle array, the Christian Arabs advanced in front of the ranks of the Byzantines; and, on the side of the Turks, the merchants who were in their army proceeded from the ranks, and invited them to the Mohammedan religion, promising to bring them into the Muslim territory, if they would take quarter from the Turks. They refused to accept these terms, and they fought a general battle, in which the Christian Arabs and Byzantines were superior to the Turks; for their number was many times greater than that of their enemies. They remained that night at their posts. The four Turkish kings held a council, in which the king of the Bajnāk said, "Give me the command tomorrow morning." They agreed to give it to him; […].[115]

The 'Turks' prevailed over the Byzantine army. The bodies of 60,000 dead Greek soldiers said to have remained on the battlefield were stacked up and used to scale the walls of Walandar. The conquered city was plundered and a large part of its inhabitants were murdered or taken into captivity. Masʿūdī adds:

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114 An unauthorized revision by a translator. In the original 60,000 warriors. Cf. al-Masʿūdī, Les Prairies, II, 60; Marquart 1903, 62; Dunlop 1954, 213.

115 The English translation of A. Sprenger (1841, 446–450) has been slightly modified. Other modern translation of this passage: al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 58–62; Pellat 1962, 177–179; Marquart 1903, 61–62; Dunlop 1954, 212–214; Konovalova 1999, 5–6; Konovalova, Perkhavko 2000, 147–148.

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> After three days, the Turks proceeded towards Constantinople. They passed a number of cultivated districts, meadows, and estates, spreading slaughter and taking prisoners, till they came to the walls of Constantinople. There they staid for about forty days, and sold the captive women and children for linen, cloths of brocade, and silk. They put the men to the sword, none received quarter; sometimes they did not spare even women and children. They made predatory excursions all over these countries, and as far as the country of the Sclavonians and Rome. At present their invasion extends even to the frontiers of Spain,[116] France, and Galicia. The predatory incursions of the above-mentioned Turkish nations continue to this day to infest Constantinople, and the above-mentioned kingdoms.[117]

Both passages cited above have long been of interest to researchers. There is a consensus among them that Masʿūdī's account describes, albeit in a distorted form, events that actually took place. In a manner typical of Muslim writers, the author draws attention to the achievements of his fellow believers, sometimes resorting to obvious exaggerations. The scale of the battle of Walandar in Masʿūdī's narrative must also arouse scepticism in the critical reader. It is hard to imagine that a battle in which, if we believe the Arab historian, well over 100,000 warriors fought, would have gone unnoticed by Byzantine historiography. Finally, the chronology of the account is questionable. These events took place during the reign of Romanos Lekapenos, but their exact dating is unclear. Masʿūdī claims that the invasion of the 'Turks' took place in the Hijri year 320 or a little bit later, but a few verses later he moves this event to 332. It is hard to resist the impression that he has combined two separate facts in his account, namely two events known to Byzantine sources, dated to 934 and 943.[118] A circumstance conducive to such a mistake was the fact that both expeditions ended in the same manner: the invaders reaching Constantinople.

116 Josef Marquart: 'Andalus' (1903, 63).

117 English translation by Sprenger (1841, 452). Cf. al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies*, II, 64; Pellat 1962, 179; Marquart 1903, 63; Konovalova 1999, 6–7; Konovalova, Perkhavko 2000, 148. ibn al-Athir also briefly mentions the attack on Walandar (12th–13th century.). Cf. Konovalova, Perkhavko 2000, 149.

118 On the 934 invasion: Th.Cont., 422–423; Georg.Mon., 913–914; Sym.Magist., 136.69 (p. 334); Io.Scyl., 228; Wortley 2010, 220–221; On the 943 invasion: Th.Cont., 430–431; Georg.Mon., 917; Sym.Magist., 136.77 (p. 337); Io.Scyl., 231; Wortley 2010, 223. Cf. Moravcsik 1970, 55–56; Antonopoulos 1993, 258–261. Both invasions took place in April, which raises suspicions that what we are dealing with here is a *topos*, which served to show the wickedness of the invaders, ready to attack the empire close to Holy Week and Easter.

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Josef Marquart was among the first researchers to carry out a critical analysis of Masʿūdī's data. The German researcher assumed 934 to be the date of the invasion of these 'Turkish peoples', which meant connecting the events from Walandar with the first Magyar expedition.[119] Marquart also convincingly demonstrated that the coalition of invaders consisted of two, rather than four ethne. Their having multiplied can be explained by the fact that the author of *Meadows of Gold* used a number of different sources that contained different variants of the names of both peoples.[120] Walandar is in all likelihood Debeltos (Δεβέλτος), a fortress located on the Bulgarian-Byzantine frontier. Its location by the Black Sea proves that the concentration of allied armies had to take place near the lower course of the Danube. This would suggest the participation of the Pechenegs in the expedition, because if the Magyars invaded on their own, the route of the expedition would most likely have been different. It would have led towards Constantinople through today's Serbia, Bulgaria (near Sofia) and Thrace.[121]

Despite their rather widespread acceptance, Marquart's findings have been questioned, at least in part. Carlile A. Macartney assumes that among the peoples mentioned by Masʿūdī, the name *Bağnà* includes the Bulgarians as well. On the basis of this statement, Macartney claims that the battle of Walandar took place in 917 and was a part of the Bulgarian-Byzantine war described above, in which the Pechenegs are said to have fought for Simeon. The presence of the Magyars in Masʿūdī's narrative is supposedly the result of the author's merging two separate events: a joint Bulgarian-Pecheneg attack on the border fortress (917) and a Magyar invasion which reached as far as to Constantinople (934).[122] Macartney's concept, although interesting, is based on a philological premise that is considered false. The British researcher identified the ethnonym *Bağnà* with the Bulgarians on the basis of the supposition that it is a distorted version of the ethnic name *Borğan*.[123] However, this kind of reasoning has no philological or palaeographic justification,[124] which deprives Macartney's hypothesis of its foundations.

A few years later, Vladimir Minorsky proposed that the name *Nūkardah* may actually refer to the Novgorodians, or more precisely to Novgorodian outcasts,

119 Marquart 1903, 63–64. For other interpretations of al- Masʿūdī's report: Macartney 1930; Bozhilov 1930, 48–53; Runciman 1988, 106–109; Kniaz'kii 2003, 15–16.

120 Marquart 1903, 65–68.

121 Marquart 1903, 69–71.

122 Macartney 1930.

123 Macartney 1930, 162.

124 Cf. Golden 1975, 29.

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who lived among the 'Turks'.[125] Irina A. Konovalova has recently explicitly referred to his findings. She claims that the attacks on Italy, Muslim Spain and France, which Masʿūdī generally attributes to a Turkic people in his reports, were mainly carried out by the Nūkardah.[126] The researcher also believes that the Rus' were active in the Lower Danube region and Bulgaria as early as the late 9th century,[127] and were likely to have travelled through this area on their way to Constantinople. It is difficult to question this last claim, but it does not explain why the Masʿūdī used the name of one Rus' sub-group instead of the general term 'Rus'. Konovalova explains that this resulted from increasing knowledge in the Muslim world about the political and ethnic relations in Rus'.[128] This argument is not convincing, however, because Masʿūdī included Nūkardah among the 'Turkish peoples', so he was not aware of their alleged Rus' ancestry.

Despite the fact that more than 100 years have passed since their first publication, Marquart's findings are still widely accepted. It should be noted, however, that they do not explain all the unclear points in Masudi's account. This is because the German researcher seems to ignore the double dating of the expedition of the 'Turkish peoples' and the accompanying events. If Masʿūdī combined two Magyar invasions, one of which (or perhaps both!) was said to be aided by the Pechenegs, the question arises as to whether his account is not in fact a conflation of information concerning a number of attacks carried out by nomadic peoples on Byzantium, the only common feature of which was the fact they occurred during Romanos Lekapenos's rule.

A further question should be asked here: what prompted the Magyars and Pechenegs to cooperate? This question is all the more justified because this expedition was probably not a retaliatory action. Marquart believed that such a military undertaking would have been recorded by Byzantine sources. He also believed that information about a dispute between the Magyars and the Pechenegs arising from the poor treatment of a Muslim merchant from Ardābil was a distorted echo of past conflicts between these two ethne on the Black Sea steppe.[129] The German scholar also claimed that information about peaceful relations with the Alans and Khazars only concerns the Magyars, and can hardly be applied to the Pechenegs.[130]

125 Minorsky 1958, 113, 160 (note 2).
126 Konovalova 1999, 11–12.
127 Konovalova 1999, 12.
128 Konovalova 1999, 15; Konovalova, Perchavko 2000, 153–157.
129 Marquart 1903, 71–74.
130 Marquart 1903, 74.

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Indeed, the joint invasion carried out by these two nomadic peoples was most likely not preceded by Byzantine provocations in the border region. It can be assumed that minor incidents not recorded in sources were probably a normal phenomenon in border areas. The problem is that Walandar, if identified as Debeltos, was on the Byzantine-Bulgarian border, which in practical terms makes it impossible for the expeditions against the Pechenegs or Magyars to have been organized by the fortress garrison. Moreover, undertaking any wide-scale expeditions against the steppe-dwellers, especially in the 930s, was not in the interests of Byzantium. Such behaviour on the part of the Empire would have been incompatible with the direction of foreign policy being pursued during Romanos Lekapenos' reign, the basic aim of which was to avoid a simultaneous conflict with two enemies. After calming relations with Bulgaria, the emperor could afford to concentrate all the state's energies to fighting the Arabs. As a result, Byzantium was soon able to take the initiative militarily, which ultimately resulted in the successful retaking of Melitene in 934.[131]

The incursion described by Masudi can potentially be seen as the result of the diplomacy of a third-party state. The fact that knowledge about events which took place along the northern borders of Byzantium could reach rather distant parts of the Arab world seems quite amazing. The chronological concurrence of the invasion of the 'Turkish peoples' and the Byzantine offensive, the crowning achievement of which was the conquest of Melitene, is also quite very curious. Romanos Lekapenos' problems along his state's north-western border were also an extremely fortunate circumstance for the Hamdanids who ruled in Mosul and Aleppo. Such tempting hypotheses are not, however, the sole explanation for the Muslims' interest in the events that took place in distant lands. After all, Muslim merchants trading in Eastern Europe were most likely the primary medium for spreading knowledge about these parts. The Byzantine-Arab conflicts of the mid-10th century, during which the Islamic world was put on the defensive, were most likely conducive to interest in accounts in which the infidels were defeated by armies comprised in part of Muslims.[132] In Masʿūdī's works, we find elements of jihadist ideology in the form of stories about the numerous followers of Mohammed who took part in the expeditions of the 'Turks', but only those waged against infidels, as well as information about attempts to convert Byzantine soldiers to the 'faith of the prophet'.

The attack described by Masudi need not have been, and probably wasn't, the result of diplomatic intrigues on the part of the Hamdanid dynasty, but

131 Ostrogorski 1967, 236; Treadgold 1997, 481–3.

132 Cf. El Cheikh 2004, 165–167.

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was most likely an ordinary looting raid. Debeltos-Walandar was not only a border fortress, it was also an important commercial centre and the seat of the bishopric. The city's wealth provided sufficient reason to attack it. However, if the raid (or raids) in question was a simple attack, free of any hidden agenda or political motivations, the question inevitably arises if there was a need to form an entire coalition of attacking forces. If it were merely a looting raid, inviting others to cooperate would seem senseless, as it would necessitate a division of the booty. The only justification would be the Magyars' fear that the Pechenegs would use the absence of their main forces as an opportunity to invade their territories. Such concerns would not be groundless, as evidenced by the events of the 890s, though at that time, the Pechenegs were searching for new territories, and were much more dangerous than in the first third of the 10th century. Yet the potential threat of an attack on a smaller scale than their catastrophic incursion in the late 9th century did indeed exist. It is also worth noting that the Magyar expedition of 934, which is usually associated with the events described in Masʿūdī's account, is considered by Byzantine sources to be the first Magyar invasion of the Empire.[133] It is therefore possible that this change in the direction of the Magyars' expansion prompted them to attempt to mitigate the threat of an attack by their former enemy by proposing a joint invasion of the Balkans. They also knew that once Byzantium realized it faced a new threat, it might call on the Pechenegs for support.

However, one key fact renders such an interpretation problematic. Byzantine chronicles do not mention the involvement of the Pechenegs in the Magyar expeditions of either 934 or 943. This silence is telling, because every invasion that reached the walls of Constantinople was accompanied by diplomatic negotiations. It is unthinkable that imperial officials would have completely ignored another participant in the expedition when drawing up a peace agreement with Magyars. Of course, it is very possible the Pechenegs were less active in the final stage of the invasion or had completely withdrew their main forces after the conquest and pillaging of Walandar. Only smaller Pecheneg units would have reached the capital of the Empire, acting as hostages and guaranteeing the peaceful intentions of their compatriots.

Another hypothesis, one that is equally probable, can be contrasted with this first one. If Masʿūdī merged two separate pillaging Magyar expeditions in

133 After their migration to Pannonia, the Magyars directed their looting-expeditions mainly to the west. In March 933 they were severely defeated by Henry I, king of East Francia, in the battle of Riade on the Unstrut River (an unidentified site somewhere in northern Thuringia). This defeat seems to have prompted the Magyars to make Byzantium the target of their future predatory expeditions. Cf. Bíró, Langó 2013, 284–285, 311.

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his work, it cannot be ruled out that he also included a third one, one chronologically close to these first two. Such an expedition might simply not have had such a spectacular conclusion, reaching its culmination point in the Byzantine borderlands. According to the chronology of the Rus' chronicles, in 944 the Pechenegs aided an expedition by Igor against the Greeks. However, this campaign was cut short by the diplomatic efforts of Constantinople, which led the Rus' prince to make peace and withdraw.[134] Before his retreat, Igor was said to have ordered the steppe warriors supporting him to attack and pillage Bulgaria. It is possible that the Pechenegs carried out this mission, first ravaging Dobrudja,[135] then clashing with imperial troops at the Byzantine border, and finally, taking and plundering Debeltos. Masʿūdī's account would thus describe three separate events that took place during the last decade of Romanos Lekapenos' rule (934–944): two Magyar invasions which reached Constantinople and a Pecheneg expedition during which part of western Bulgaria and the Byzantine border region were ravaged.

Regardless of which hypothesis one accepts, the presence of the Pechenegs in Walandar itself should be considered probable. They stood before the fortress either in 934 as allies of the Magyars or a decade later on their own. Masʿūdī's description of the battle seems credible. The combat methods used by the invaders did not differ substantially from standard steppe practices.[136] On the other hand, data on the size of the imperial army and the number of casualties it sustained raises doubts. It is difficult to believe that Byzantium was able to concentrate such a large number of troops (65,000 men) in such a short period of time. All the more so given that its mobilization capabilities were significantly reduced by its involvement in fighting against the Syrian Hamdanid emirate.[137] The description presented earlier of the events of the

134 Cf. below.

135 Bozhilov 1973, 60; Dimitrov 2011, 228–229; Polovoi 1958, 138–147; Madgearu 2013, 26. The Pecheneg invasion is said to be evidenced by the 'zhupan Dimitr' inscription, discovered in Mircea Vodă, near Constantia. Its meaning, however, is quite unclear. Igor's expedition against the Greeks and the subsequent Pecheneg invasion of Dobrudja are dated to 943 by Dimitrov and Polovoi. This chronology led the latter scholar to adopt the rather dubious interpretation that Igor was at the head of an entire coalition of 'peoples of the north', which, apart from the Pechenegs, the Rus' and Slavic tribes, also included the Magyars. However, the reasoning of the Russian researcher is noteworthy, as it may reflect the manner of thinking of Masʿūdī, who due to a chronological coincidence, may have combined two separate expeditions.

136 Cf. Chapter 4.3.

137 Ostrogorski 1967, 236; Treadgold 1997, 481–3. According to the estimates of contemporary scholars, in the 10th century the Byzantine army consisted of just over 80,000 soldiers (Cheynet 2006b, 164–165). However, for logistical reasons, the Empire never operated with

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year 917 showed that a more extensive offensive against Simeon required diplomatic efforts aimed at tactically freeing up troops stationed in the East. It was only after the signing of a peace treaty with the Arabs that these forces could be transferred to the Balkan region. This example shows that Romanos Lekapenos, while militarily engaged in Syria, could not have immediately sent such a strong army to defend Walandar. Thus, the Byzantine army that faced the nomad hordes not only did not outnumber them, but was even significantly smaller in numbers. However, Masʿūdī's information on the number of nomads should be approached with caution.[138] The imperial army's losses were certainly substantial, but Masʿūdī's story about the tremendous number of dead and their bodies being used by the attackers to climb the walls of the besieged city was most likely a product of his informants' vivid imaginations.

Marquart is wrong, however, when he claims that it was only the Magyars who established good relations with the Khazars. Although the Pechenegs' encroachment on the Black Sea steppe greatly affected the functioning of *Pax Chazarica*, with time, the rulers of the khaganate have come to terms with the consequences of this migration and established a working relationship with their new western neighbour. Seeking to improve relations with a recent enemy, especially when it was powerful, would not have been an unusual situation.

The expedition of 934, regardless of whether or not the Pechenegs took part in it, points to a change in Byzantine-Magyar relations. This people, who had previously acted as an ally of Constantinople, unexpectedly proved that they were ready to take hostile action against the Empire. Less than a decade later a second invasion took place, which again proved that the Balkan provinces of the Byzantine Empire were not completely safe. Of course, the new enemy did not threaten the interests of the Empire as much as the Bulgarian state had during the reign of Tsar Simeon. However, the expeditions of the Magyars, especially when accompanied by the Pechenegs, could have been extremely troublesome. The latter people proved that they posed a threat not only to the southern Crimean estates of Byzantium, but also to its Balkan provinces. During the reign of Tsar Peter, the Bulgarian state was unable or unwilling to act as a buffer to protect the Empire from the armed incursions of the nomads.[139] The

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all its forces. Moreover, in the 10th century, despite its division into Eastern and Western parts, Byzantium had only one army capable of resisting a mass invasion. Therefore, before a major expedition, the troops of the East and the West usually joined forces.

138 However, Masʿūdī's information is sometimes used to estimate the mobilization potential of the peoples who supposedly participated in the Battle of Walandar. Cf. Zimonyi 2014a, 176–177.

139 I do not intend to enter into a discussion here about what Bulgaria was during the reign of Tsar Peter. Regardless of its condition, Byzantine diplomats, especially after the

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events of 934 were therefore the first in a series of events that raised Byzantine politicians' awareness of the Pechenegs' significance, and, over time, forced them to change their attitudes towards this people.

5.4 The Pechenegs as Allies of the Byzantine Empire

The events of 941–944, which began with an unexpected Rus' invasion of Byzantium, would be a turning point.[140] Its causes have long been the object of speculation. Older historiography pointed to disagreements that were likely to have stemmed from differences in the two sides' interpretations of the provisions of the first Rus'-Byzantine treaty, traditionally dated to 912. It was also assumed that improved relations with Bulgaria following the peace of 927 changed the attitude of the court in Constantinople to the Rus'. The Rurikids were no longer needed as a potential ally of the Empire against the Bulgarians. Finally, it was assumed that Rus' had resumed its expansion in the Black Sea region after a long pause during which it extended its rule over a number of Slavic tribes. On the eve of its military campaign against Byzantium in 941, Rus' is said to have expanded onto the Taman Peninsula.[141]

The actions of the Rus' in this region would seem to have been connected with their planned attack in 941. However, the circumstances surrounding these events were much more complicated. From Khazar sources (written in Hebrew), we know that the Rus' appeared on the peninsula as part of a diplomatic arrangement with the Byzantines.[142] This was an attack, above all, on the interests of the Khazar state and was carried out in retaliation for the persecution of Christians in the khaganate. For the sake of clarity, this oppression, in turn, had been in retribution for the earlier persecution of Jews in Byzantium, in particular, Romanos Lekapenos' forcing them to convert to

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experiences of the decade 934–944, must have seen that it did not provide protection against armed penetration by the 'northern and Scythian peoples'. Of course, this kind of observation did not have to and probably did not lead to the conviction that it was immediately necessary to liquidate the Bulgarian state. According to Skylitzes, Nikephoros Phokas accused Peter of failing to react to the invasions of the Magyars. Io.Scyl., 276–277; Wortley 2010, 265. John Zonaras cites the sharp response of the Bulgarian Tsar to Phokas's accusations. Io.Zon., 513. For one reason why Peter let the Magyar expeditions through: Zlatarski 1927, 541–544; Dimitrov 1998, 72–77; Mladjov 1998, 120–123.

140 PVL 1, AM 6449 (941), col. 44–45.

141 Levchenko 1956, 139; Łowmiański 1973, 201–202; Litavrin 2000, 69.

142 Golb, Pritsak 1982, 114–119, 136–137.

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Christianity in the early 930s.[143] The first attack by Rus' on the Khazar possessions in Taman more precisely, on the city of S-m-k-r-ts, must have taken place at the end of the 930s.[144] The attackers initially managed to move onto the peninsula, but were later defeated by a Khazar commander named Pesah, who reclaimed this territory and forced them to attack the Byzantine Empire.

In 941 the Rus'[145] landed their forces in Bithynia and plundered its coasts with impunity for four months. Finally, after being cornered by the Byzantine army and suffering several defeats, the Rus' were forced to retreat. Although they managed to escape onto the Black Sea, they encountered a Byzantine fleet commanded by Theophanes near the Thracian coast. With the aid of 'Greek fire' he managed to destroy many Rus' ships.[146] Despite this defeat, Igor attacked Byzantium again soon afterwards. This time, however, apart from a large Slavic-Varangian contingent, he also brought with him the Pechenegs.[147] Their involvement made the expedition of 944 very dangerous for the Empire, as it posed a threat to the capital both from land and sea. The allied armies reached the Danube, where their invasion forces probably split into two groups: the Pechenegs would march to Constantinople through Bulgaria, while the Rus' would sail to the Bosporus along the western shores of the Black Sea. The Byzantine Empire's military involvement in Mesopotamia, where John Kourkouas enjoyed spectacular victories,[148] had left it without an army capable of resisting the invaders in the west; nor could it count on the help of any allies. Its diplomatic influence remained the imperial court's only weapon.

143 Łowmiański 1973, 198–199; Zuckerman 1995, 255–256; Shepard 1998, 30. The persecution initiated by Romanos Lekapenos was supposed to have resulted from the failure of the Christian mission in Alania, from which the Christian clergy were expelled.

144 Shepard 1999a, 266; 2006, 26.

145 According to Khazar sources, the commander of the Rus' expedition, called Helgu (or Oleg in the Slavic version of this name), withdrew after the defeat to the east and died in Persia (Frs). Constantin Zuckerman links this information with Miskawajhi's account of the Rus' expedition to the lands of the Berdaa on the Caspian Sea. Initially, the invaders were successful, but later almost everyone was killed, including the commander. They fell victim to dysentery and successful attacks by one of the local rulers. According to Zuckerman, Miskawajhi gave the last details about the expedition led by Helgu/Oleg, who after suffering a defeat on the Black Sea to the Byzantines, made his way to the Caspian Sea, where he died. Zukerman identifies the aforementioned Helgu with Prince Oleg, known from Rus' chronicles, who, according to Rus' tradition, died in quite unclear circumstances. In 941 the empire was supposedly then attacked by Igor and Oleg. After his initial failures, the young prince most likely abandoned the old prince and returned to Rus'. Golb, Pritsak 1982, 118–119; Miskawajhi, 67–69. Cf. Zuckerman 1995, 256–268.

146 PVL 1, AM 6449 (941), col. 44–45.

147 PVL 1, AM 6452 (944), col. 45.

148 Ostrogorski 1967, 237; Cheynet 2006, 30; El Cheikh 2004, 165.

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This diplomacy followed two paths. Agents of Constantinople attempted to persuade the Pechenegs to withdraw from their alliance with Igor by offering generous gifts. Igor, in turn, was offered a tribute greater than that collected by Oleg and the renewal of the previous peace treaty, which also regulated the terms of trade.[149] The Kievan prince decided to accept the Byzantine offer and halt his march. Then, having ordered the Pechenegs to plunder the Bulgarian lands, he set off on his way back to Kiev.[150]

The expeditions of 941 and 944 were the last in a series of events that made the Byzantine elites aware of the political importance of the Pechenegs. The peace that prevailed in their relations with Rus' between 911 and 941, as well as the pacification of relations with the Bulgarian state had turned the attention of Constantinople's diplomats away from the Black Sea steppe zone. Improved relations with both states facilitated the Empire's eastward expansion, indirectly helping to secure its borders in Asia Minor, and thus promoted Byzantine interests; however, the safety of the northern and north-western borders was not likewise secured. Meanwhile, the events of the first half of the 10th century proved that the Byzantine Empire needed an ally in this region to help it deal with recurring threats. It is possible that in the late 9th century the Magyars played such a role. However, the year 896 changed this situation. The court in Constantinople initially failed to come to terms with this fact, as evidenced by its attempts, probably no later than 907, to encourage the Magyars to return to their previous homeland. These attempts by Byzantium to cooperate with the Magyars' former conquerors, dating back to 917, did not bring the expected results. Instead, it appears to have contributed to a spreading of mistrust between Byzantium and the Pechenegs. A political vacuum was created by the departure of the Magyars. Initially, this did not imperil Byzantine interests in the region, but the 930s brought new threats. The first was a change in relations with the Magyars, who had transformed from a client into an independent ethnos ready to take hostile action against the Empire. The Rus', whom Romanos Lekapenos wanted to see as the military arm of Byzantium in the Black Sea region, proved to be a dangerous and troublesome partner. Attempting to use them against the Khazars appears to have been a serious political mistake, as shown by the course of events, which ultimately resulted in this recent ally becoming a dangerous enemy. A permanent Rus' presence in Tmutarakan threatened over the long term the security of Byzantine possessions in Crimea. Despite its initially negative consequences for the Empire, Pesah's victory should be considered an event that helped restore equilibrium

149 PVL 1, AM 6452 (944), col. 45–46.

150 PVL 1, AM 6452 (944), col. 46; AM 6453 (945), col. 46–54.

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along the northern shores of the Black Sea. The invasion of 941 rendered the atmosphere in Constantinople reminiscent of that which emerged after the Rus' expedition of 860.[151] These incidents were of particular concern to Bulgaria, which did not want to act as a buffer to protect the outskirts of the Empire's capital. The events of 934–944 were therefore a reminder of the importance of the Lower Danube area and the Black Sea steppe for the safety of Byzantium, thus highlighting the role of the Pechenegs.

When was a second, more permanent Byzantine-Pecheneg alliance concluded? This had probably already taken place when Constantine VII was editing his *De administrando imperio*. The years 949–951 should therefore be regarded its *terminus ante quem*. The information provided by the learned emperor in chapters one to eight seem to indicate that relations between the two political partners were very tense at the time. Constantine VII writes about the need to send an imperial diplomatic agent to the Pechenegs every year with appropriate gifts and letters, and of ensuring the nomads' loyalty by securing hostages from them, who were detained in Constantinople under the care of a government minister. We also read here about how relations with Pecheneg leaders were established and other diplomatic rituals.[152] It seems, therefore, that the date when the alliance was established can be safely moved back a few years. It is possible that it was formed near the end of Romanos Lekapenos' reign, i.e., in 944. This would mean that the court in Constantinople, as it was deciding whether or not to renew the treaty with Rus', was also holding political negotiations with the Pechenegs aimed at forming an alliance that could help secure the agreement they were planning to sign with the Rurikids. Since we know that this followed the same procedure as Byzantine diplomacy in 971, when a peace agreement with Sviatoslav was accompanied by a renewal of a political alliance with the Pechenegs, it can be assumed that twenty-seven years earlier the case was no different. However, it seems more probable that the idea of an alliance with the nomads was conceived by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who strongly emphasized its importance in *De administrando imperio*, especially as a tool to stop the Rus', Magyars and Bulgarians. The alliance with the Pechenegs should therefore be dated back to the beginning of his independent rule, i.e., around 945.[153]

In view of the findings presented above, a question arises as to what kinds of changes may have arisen in the relationship between the Pechenegs and

151 This was surely both surprising and dangerous. Liutprand., V 15 (p. 137–139); Georg.Mon., 914–916. Cf. Franklin, Shepard 1996, 113–114; Shepard 1999a, 269.

152 DAI, I–VIII (pp. 48–57).

153 Shepard 1999a, 273; Paroń 2007a, 103–105.

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Rus' as result of improved relations between the nomads and the Byzantine Empire. Did the end of Pecheneg attacks on Kherson coincide with a resumption of armed incursions against Rus'? No such changes were recorded by the Rus'. Although Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes about the possibility of the Pechenegs attacking the Rurikids' possessions, and later, about the devastation they wreaked while Rus' armies were away on a military expedition,[154] Igor's death in 945 resulted in a 20-year break in Rus' expansion. Constantine VII also notes that the nomads maintained trade relations with the inhabitants of Rus'.[155] This last fact seems to prove that in the mid-10th century relations between the Pechenegs and Kiev could have been quite good, or at least good enough not be dominated by military confrontation.

A change that would severely affect the Pechenegs' situation occurred in the latter half of the 960s. *The Primary Russian Chronicle* states that Sviatoslav I assumed power over Kievan Rus' in 964.[156] Virtually all of his reign was characterized by dynamic expansion, the first victim of which was the Khazar Khaganate. Rus' chronicles report that the Khagan's army was defeated, allowing the Kievan prince to seize the fortress of Sarkel, and most likely Itil, the capital of the Khazar state.[157] In that same year (965), Rus' also defeated the Kasogians and Yassians. The first people are identified as the Cherkess, who inhabited the Taman Peninsula, and the latter as the Alans, who lived in the North Caucasus.[158] Ibn Hawqal, a 10th-century Arab author, provided additional information about these events:

> At the present time, the Rūs have left nothing to the Bulghār, Burtās and Khazars but a few worthless ruins. They fell upon them and looted everything, obtaining in their territories more than they could have hoped for.[159]

154 DAI, II (pp. 48–51).

155 Cf. Chapter 4.2 of the present book.

156 PVL 1, AM 6472 (964), col. 64–65.

157 PVL 1, AM 6473 (965), col. 65. Cf. Golden 1980, 82; 2000, 297.

158 PVL 1, AM 6473 (965), col. 65. Cf. Artamonov 1962, 426; Pletneva 1976, 71.

159 Quote from: Lunde, Stone 2012, 178. Cf. Dunlop 1954, 241–242; Grekow 1955, 480. Rus' chronicles and ibn Hawqal seem to describe the same event. Differences in dating (Hawqal claims that the Rus' invasion took place in 968/9) incline some researchers to accept the hypothesis of Sviatoslav having undertaken two expeditions against the Khazars. Cf. Kalinina 1976, 100 (the researcher adopts the following sequence of expeditions: 965 – invasion of the White Tower-Sarkel, the Kasogians and Yassians; 967 – an expedition against the Danube Bulgarians; 968/9 – second invasion of Khazaria, and the conquest and destruction of its main cities); Novosel'tsev 1990, 225–227 (accepts T.M. Kalinina's reasoning). Most scholars, however, believe that there was only one Rus'

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The Muslim writer is most likely confusing the Volga Bulgars with the Danube Bulgars, who were also victims of Sviatoslav's aggression, though not in 965.[160] However, it is true that Itil and Samandar, the main centres of the Khazar state, were indeed devastated. The last fact and the attack on peoples of the Caucasus subordinate to the khaganate signalled the definitive dismemberment of the *Pax Chazarica*. Although the Pechenegs had inflicted a serious blow to it in the late 9th century when they occupied the Black Sea steppe, later events evidenced the continued vitality of the Khazars. In his description of the return of Rus' troops from the Caspian expedition of 913–914, Mas'ūdī shows that the khaganate still controlled the Volga route. Igor's raiding forces learned this in a dramatic way when they were attacked by Muslim mercenaries hired by the Khagan and his allies, the Burdas and Volga Bulgars.[161] The victory of Pesah over the Rus' commander Oleg-Helgu (HLGW) described above also confirms the strength of the khaganate in the first half of the 10th century. Although the Bulgars began their struggle for independence in the early 920s, similar processes were not yet present in other parts of the Empire. Joseph ben Aaron, the khaganate's last ruler, still controlled a vast territory.[162] Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, whose account was probably written in the mid-960s, and therefore just before the fall of Khazaria, also mentions its inhabitants among the most significant peoples of the north.[163]

The collapse of the khaganate, therefore, occurred suddenly. Sviatoslav's aim, apart from seizing spoils, was most likely to eliminate it as a competing political and commercial centre. Igor's successor would subject the Viatichi, the last East Slavic tribe to still recognize the sovereignty of the khaganate, to his rule. He additionally took control of at least a part of the Don, a major transportation route. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that the Rus' established themselves in Sarkel, while there is less certainty about their permanent presence in Tmutarakan.[164] Such territorial acquisitions made it

expedition, which, moving along the Volga, first destroyed the Burdas, then captured and sacked Itil, and then attacked the northern Caucasus, finally sailing via Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov into the Don. Sailing upstream, they reached Sarkel, which they also conquered. Cf. Bartol'd 1963, 851; Artamonov 1962, 427; Dunlop 1954, 243–244; Gadlo 1979, 207; 1994, 56–57; Golden 1980, 82.

160 Marquart 1903, 474–475; Bartol'd 1963, 850–851; Kalinina 1976, 96; Novosel'tsev 1990, 225.

161 Cf. above, note 103.

162 Perepiska, 81–83, 98–102. The area controlled by Khagan Joseph allegedly stretched over an area that took four months' travel to cross.

163 Ibn Yaqub, 52; Mishin 1996, 190.

164 The scale of Sviatoslav's territorial acquisitions and length of possession is unclear. From the information provided by ibn Hawqal, it seems that he took over all the lands of the Khazars and the peoples subordinated to them. However, a literal reading of the

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possible to reduce traffic on the route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', which was controlled by the Pechenegs along parts of the Lower Dnieper.

However, another consequence of the fall of the *Pax Chazarica* is equally important. It has been repeatedly mentioned that the *raison d'état* for the khaganate had been to organize and secure the development of trade. The political system built to fulfil these tasks limited the migration of the warrior nomads who came from Inner Asia to the Volga region. Although in the late 9th century the Khazars and their allies did not manage to stop the Pechenegs from moving onto the Black Sea steppe, this did not mean that their system had been dismantled. It was not until the invasion in 965 that the barrier protecting them from attacks of the nomads who lived in the Volga region was destroyed. The situation that ensued would put the Pechenegs in serious danger,[165] as they were about to be forced to fight a bitter conflict with their old enemies, the Uzes, which would significantly weaken their position on the Black Sea steppe.

It is unclear whether the Pechenegs realized how important the buffer the khaganate provided was to their security. The exact shape of their relations with the Khazars in the 10th century is also unknown. In the *Schechter Text* dated to the mid-10th century, the Pechenegs were not listed among the Khagan's allies.[166] In *De administrando imperio*, an almost contemporary source, Constantine Porphyrogenitus did not classify them as enemies of the Khazars who might attack them.[167] It is therefore likely that in the first half of the 10th century, relations between the Pechenegs and Khazars improved. The Pechenegs were most likely involved in a system of trade relations established

information supplied by the Arab writer is not justified. Most researchers assume that the Rus' prince conquered only part of the attacked lands. Cf. Łowmiański 1973, 217 (seizure of Tmutarakan); Artamonov 1962, 429, 430–431 (Sviatoslav conquered only the Don region, to Kerch Strait); Gadlo 1979, 57; 1994, 207 (assumes that Sviatoslav did not conquer any territories apart from Sarkel. His reaching the Don region, the Volga region or the northern Caucasus was allegedly prevented by the Pechenegs). For a different interpretation: Novosel'tsev 1990, 224, 227 (extensive territorial acquisitions, among which there were also areas around the Volga estuary, allegedly controlled by the Rus' at the beginning of the 980s). However, there are researchers who date the strengthening of the Rurikids' presence in Tmutarakan only to the 980s. Cf. Chapter 4.2 of the present book, footnote 134.

165 Łowmiański 1973, 217 (one cannot accept his theses. The fall of the khaganate did not embolden the Pechenegs, as much as it struck a blow to their interests); Golden 1980, 85 (he claims that Byzantium was most severely affected by the fall of the khaganate); Romashov 1999, 35.

166 Golb, Pritsak 1982, 120–121.

167 DAI, X–XII (p. 62–65).

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by the Khazars,[168] which cannot, however, be regarded as proof of their political dependence on the khaganate.

The position taken by the Pechenegs during the events of 965 therefore remains a mystery. According to some Russian researchers, on his expedition against the Khazars, Sviatoslav had to secure his rear by forming an alliance with the Pechenegs, which is said to be evidenced by the fact that the nomads took part in the attack on Khazaria.[169] This interpretation is allegedly supported by Miskawajhi (932–1030), a Persian historian and philosopher. In his world history, *The Experiences of Nations*, he recorded an invasion of Khazaria in 965 supposedly carried out by some 'Turks'.[170] This extraordinary chronological coincidence suggests that they acted in collusion with Rus', or that they simply spontaneously took advantage of the khaganate's weakened state. However, it is the identity of the aggressors that is crucial here. Most researchers rightly assume that they were most likely not the Pechenegs, but the Uzes,[171] known to have been potential enemies of the Khazars in the mid-10th century.[172] The Pechenegs probably took a neutral, cautious attitude towards the events of 965. Perhaps they assumed that the khaganate would be able to overcome Rus' aggression, as they had many times before. The Pechenegs most likely only became concerned as a result of the consequences of the fall of Khazaria. This included, above all, Sviatoslav establishing settlements in Sarkel, on the eastern borderlands of Patzinacia. The presence of the Rus' in the valley of the Don was most certainly seen as dangerous and provocative. The collapse of trade relations, which most likely followed the fall of the *Pax Chazarica*, would also have negative economic consequences. The Pechenegs benefited from this trade, so they must have suffered from its absence as well. Concerns about Rus' expansion may have prompted the nomads to attempt an assault on Kiev in 968.

This was one of a number of episodes that had their start three years earlier, in the highly eventful year of 965, when Bulgarian emissaries arrived in Constantinople to demand the tribute paid by previous *basileis*. In response, Emperor Nikephoros Phokas had the emissaries publicly ridiculed and flogged. Such a highly undiplomatic gesture was certain to lead to armed conflict with Bulgaria. Phokas himself did not take serious military action, however, as this

168 Cf. Chapter 4.2 of the present book.

169 Tolstov 1948, 252; Pletneva 1958, 215; Kalinina 1976, 94; Gadlo 1979, 57; 1994, 207 (Sviatoslav made an alliance not only with the Pechenegs, but also with the Uzes).

170 Miskawajhi, 223. Miskawajhi's information is also repeated by ibn al-Athir, who was writing in the 13th century. Cf. Dunlop 1954, 244.

171 Artamonov 1962, 431; Golden 1980, 83 (note 261); 1972, 77–80; Novosel'tsev 1990, 225.

172 DAI, X 3–4 (p. 62).

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would have forced him to cease his military activity in the east. He merely destroyed a few border fortresses, and entrusted Sviatoslav with the task of persecuting Bulgaria.[173] The Byzantine Emperor's choice of ally is quite puzzling. Above all, it begs the question why he did not choose the Pechenegs, who could easily have attacked Bulgaria due to their geographical proximity. Moreover, they were tied by a political alliance to the Byzantine Empire and did not appear to have any greater political ambitions. The Emperor's behaviour is quite telling, as it reveals the position of the Pechenegs among the allies of Byzantium at that time. It is clear that the ruler preferred political and military cooperation with the Rus' prince rather than with the nomads, who, although militant, were seen by him as being too wild and unpredictable. Nikephoros Phokas's choice helped Kiev and Constantinople establish a closer relationship than that which had previously been achieved through the regent Princess Olga. During the reign of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, she had visited the court in Constantinople and been baptized there.[174] Her visit increased the chances for consolidating the peaceful relationship between the two countries.[175]

However, it soon turned out that the hopes of Byzantine diplomats were misplaced. Sviatoslav readily complied with the request of the *basileus*, and in 967 launched his first attack on the Balkans, but after his victory he did not intend to leave Bulgaria, choosing Pereiaslavets (Little Preslav), situated on the Lower Danube, as his new base of operations.[176] An attack on Kiev by the Pechenegs in 968 forced the Rus' ruler to abandon this new territory and head for his capital with reinforcements to save the city from the nomads.[177]

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173 Ostrogorski 1967, 246; Treadgold 1997, 502; Leszka, Marinow 2015, 181–182.

174 DCB, I, 594–598; PVL 1, AM 6463 (955), col. 60–64. The time of Olga's visit (visits?) in Tsar'grad and the time and place of her baptism is the subject of debate. In addition to the traditional chronology according to which the duchess came to Constantinople in 957, some researchers assume that this event took place 11 years earlier, in 946. Cf. Obolensky 2000, 189–190; 1994a, 56–57; Sakharov 1980, 272–292; Litavrin 1981, 35–48; 1986, 49–57; Nazarenko 1989, 66–83 (the researcher considers both dates to be equally probable); Franklin, Shepard 1996, 142–143 (researchers generally avoid giving the exact date of Olga's visit in Constantinople); Zuckerman 2000, 647–672; Kresten 2000.

175 Ostrogorski 1967, 240–241; Grekow 1955, 479; Litavrin 1986, 57. Apart from hopes for the Christianization of Rus', Olga's visit (visits?) to Constantinople probably also resulted in the fact that Byzantium was using Varangian forces to fight the Arabs. The Rus' warriors were said to be already fighting during the siege of Khadat (955) and during the expedition of Nikephoros II Phokas to Crete (960–61).

176 On the chronology of Sviatoslav's expeditions to the Balkans: Kryshkovskii 1952, 127–138; Stokes 1962, 44–57; 1962a, 466–496; Sakharov 1991, 122–156; Leszka, Marinov 2015, 184 (researchers suggest that the first of Sviatoslav's expeditions took place in August 968).

177 PVL 1, AM 6476 (968), col. 65–67.

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The Pecheneg expedition is usually assumed[178] to have been inspired by Byzantine diplomacy. Indeed, if one assumes that the Byzantines sought to drive Sviatoslav out from the Danube region, a Pecheneg attack would have greatly benefited them. However, it is noteworthy that *The Primary Russian Chronicle*, the only source reporting the invasion of 968, does not mention any external political influences. It is worth recalling that the Pechenegs' attack was carried out according to their standard military tactics, i.e., while the main Rus' forces were far from Kiev.[179] Moreover, the destruction of the Khazar Khaganate had aroused concern and irritation among the Pechenegs. Their expedition to the Rus' capital may have been dictated by the desire to weaken Sviatoslav, who was aggressive and posed a threat to their interests. Therefore, it seems that the nomads did not need any external political power to find a reason to attack Kiev.

The loos of the capital city, most likely involving its destruction and the murder of the majority of its inhabitants, including the members of the ruling dynasty, would have been catastrophic for Rus'. However, Sviatoslav managed to arrive in time, defeat his enemies and chase them into the steppe. Soon after his victory, the prince embarked on a second expedition to the Balkans, assumed to have begun in 969. This time he led an army supported by the Magyars, Bulgarians and Pechenegs.[180] It is quite surprising that the Pechenegs took part in an invasion aimed at harming the interests of Byzantium. In the light of available source data, one can only offer a hypothetical explanation as to why they were involved. It is important first to estimate how many Pecheneg units were fighting for Sviatoslav. It seems they were not very numerous in size, because they did not constitute the bulk of the Kievan prince's army, but merely provided it with support. Moreover, they represented a people who had recently had been in a violent conflict with Olga's son, so he could not be certain about their loyalty. Observations made in the previous chapter show that it was not a virtue the Pechenegs particularly valued.[181] Therefore, if Sviatoslav wanted to have full control over his nomad forces, they could only constitute

178 Pletneva 1958, 215–216; Stokes 1962a, 482; Obolensky 2000, 129; 1994a, 58; Sakharov 1991, 123, 132; Wozniak 1984, 310; Treadgold 1997, 503; Spinei 2009, 98. Some scholars, mainly Bulgarian, believe that the invasion of Kiev was inspired by the Bulgarians: Zlatarski 1927, 587–588; Koledarov 1979, 53; Dimitrov 2011, 233–234 (here also a review of views on the subject). Finally, some researchers believe that they were initiated by the dying Khazar Khaganate: Kalinina 1976, 97.

179 This model is discussed by Constantine Porphyrogenitus: DAI, II, IV (pp. 48–53). Cf. Chapter 4.3 of the present book.

180 Io.Scyl., 288; Wortley 2010; s. 275–276; Io.Zon., 524; Trapp 1986, 33. According to these authors, Sviatoslav brought to the Balkans an army of 308,000 and 300,000 warriors respectively. However, these figures raise understandable doubts.

181 Cf. Chapter 4.4.

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a small fraction of his entire army. Poland's Bolesław Chrobry (the Brave) had most likely adopted a similar approach in his 1018 expedition to Kiev. Only 1000 Pecheneg warriors supported the Polish ruler at that time.[182] According to Rus' chronicles, during its second expedition against the Bulgarians, the Kievan prince's army consisted of 10,000 men.[183] Experts on the subject consider this number reliable, and most likely refers to the Slavic-Varangian units led by Sviatoslav.[184] The number of allied troops was probably no higher than half of this number, which, taking into account the fact that this also included the Magyars and Bulgarians, suggests that no more than 1,500 to 2,000 Pechenegs took part in Sviatoslav's expedition. Such a number was only a fraction of the mobilization potential of this ethnos.

This last finding provides a basis for two hypotheses for determining the nature and motivation of the Pechenegs' participation in the expedition of the Kiev Prince. The first one would assume the formation of an alliance between the Rus' and just one tribe among the nomads, that which had inhabited the western extremes of Patzinacia (tribe Giazichopon). This tribe may have already attacked Bulgaria earlier, which would have justified its participation in the Kievan expedition. In addition, it was peripheral in relation to other Pecheneg tribes, as well as being located far from the main Rus' cities, which meant it rarely threatened the centre of the Kievan state. Presumably it also did not take part in the invasion of 968, so it was not at war with Sviatoslav. This cooperation with Giazichopon was important since it could protect the rear of the Rus' army. Byzantium could have tried to persuade the Pechenegs who lived near the Danube to carry out sabotage actions against the rear of Sviatoslav's army in Bulgaria. The alliance with this tribe prevented such a possibility.

However, there is also a second possibility, according to which the Pecheneg auxiliary unit would act as hostages, guaranteeing the neutrality of the Pechenegs during the Byzantine-Rus' war. *The Primary Russian Chronicle* describes Sviatoslav's victory in 968 in a brief passage:

> He [Sviatoslav – A.P.] therefore collected an army, and drove the Pechenegs out into the steppe. Thus there was peace.[185]

182 Cf. Chapter 6.1. of the present book.

183 PVL 1, AM 6479 (971), col. 70.

184 Runciman 1930, 205 (note 4); Łowmiański 1973, 218. According to Leo the Deacon, 30,000 'Scythians' fought against 10,000 Byzantines, commanded by Bardas Skleros, in the Battle of Arcadiopolis. The number of Sviatoslav's soldiers is probably overestimated. The forces of both sides, judging by the outcome of the battle, were probably equal, or the barbarians had a small advantage. LeoDiac., VI 12 (p. 109); Talbot, Sullivan 2005, 159.

185 PVL 1, AM 6476 (968), col. 67; Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 86.

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However, if relations between the Pechenegs and Rus' had actually become peaceful, i.e., the nomads had ceased their attacks on Kiev, then driving the Pechenegs 'into the steppe' alone could not have been the main reason for this peace. Sviatoslav had most likely defeated his southern neighbours in 968 in a rather spectacular fashion, forcing them to agree to an alliance and provide auxiliary forces for the planned expedition.[186] Only such a solution would have guaranteed the safety of Kiev. The alliances with Hungary and Bulgaria served similar purposes. Their participation in the expedition against Byzantium limited or even excluded the chance of diplomatic intervention on the part of Constantinople aimed at using these two ethne against Sviatoslav. The second hypothesis therefore seems to be more justified, as a forced alliance with the Pechenegs would have secured the rear of the Rus' forces. The promise of abundant spoils in the Balkans would certainly have helped overcome any doubts or objections.[187]

The second expedition began with a number of successes for the Rus', at least up until their defeat in the Battle of Arcadiopolis (970). Contrary to the accounts found in Byzantine historiography, which described the clash as a defeat for the barbarians, Sviatoslav's army was not completely crushed, but the Rus' prince was forced to stop his march on Constantinople. A fact of particular importance for our discussion is that in the first phase of the battle, the Byzantine troops managed to cause considerable losses among the Pecheneg forces.[188] It is even possible that they was completely annihilated. Sviatoslav thus lost his hostages, which resulted in even greater anger and an increased desire for revenge among their kinsmen.

The further course of the war was unfavourable for Rus'. During the course of his brilliant campaign, Emperor John Tzimiskes forced Sviatoslav to withdraw to the Danube and take refuge within the walls of Dristra. After a long siege, and one final failed attempt to break through the ring of Byzantine troops in July 971, the Rus' ruler capitulated.[189] John Tzimiskes forced his defeated opponent to accept harsh peace conditions, which, however, did

186 It is worth noting that Sviatoslav's behaviour is very similar to the behaviour of the commander Pesah towards the defeated Rus' forces led by Helgu, mentioned in the *Schechter's Text*. He ordered them to attack Byzantium, which was to be a form of reprisal for attacking the territory of the khaganate. Cf. above.

187 Some Bulgarian researchers find the participation of the Pechenegs in the second expedition as allies of Sviatoslav difficult to accept. They suggest that the nomads formed an alliance only with the Bulgarians. Cf. Dimitrov 2011, 237–238. Bozhilov 1973, 60.

188 Io.Scyl., 289–290; Wortley 2010, s. 277; Io.Zon., 524–525; Trapp 1986, 33–34.

189 Ostrogorski 1967, 248–249.

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not exclude the possibility of further cooperation. Sviatoslav had to pledge to withdraw from Bulgaria and never return to the Balkans, to stop his attacks on Kherson, and provide military support to the Empire in the event of a conflict with a third country. In return, Tzimiskes renewed the trade privileges of Rus' merchants.[190]

It is significant that after the treaty was signed, the Archbishop (*archiereus*) of Euchaita, Theophilos was sent to the Pechenegs. His task was to renew the alliance with the nomads, which had been undermined by their forced alliance with the Rus' prince. As allies of the imperial court, the Pechenegs were told not to invade Bulgaria, which, since much of it had come under the direct control of the Byzantine Empire, was a reasonable demand. Theophilos also asked the nomads, on behalf of the Rus' ruler, to allow Sviatoslav to pass safely through their territory as he returned to his homeland.[191] The Pechenegs agreed to fulfil all of the archbishop's requests with the exception of the last one, which clearly indicated their intentions towards the Kievan prince.[192]

Theophilos' mission seems to prove that the court in Constantinople intended to continue the policy towards the Pechenegs and Rus' formulated in the mid-10th century by Constantine VII. Although Byzantine diplomats wished to maintain peaceful relations with Kiev, they were still concerned about the excessive growth of its power. Good relations with the inhabitants of the Black Sea steppe served as a factor in suppressing Rus' expansion. The events of 965–971 confirmed the possibility of a renewal of such a policy. However, the hostile stance of the nomads now provided Byzantine diplomacy with an important lesson, one that would most likely be long remembered. By denying Sviatoslav a safe return, the Pechenegs unequivocally stated that they did not intend to be an obedient tool of Constantinople. This observation most likely reduced the value of the nomads as a political partner in the eyes of the Byzantine elites. The fact that for the next nearly half-century (until 1017) there is no mention of any Byzantine-Pecheneg contact seems to confirm this hypothesis.

190 Io.Scyl., 309; Wortley 2010, 293; Io.Zon., 534–535; Trapp 1986, 40; PVL 1, AM 6479 (971), col. 72–73.

191 Io.Scyl., 309–310; Wortley 2010, 293; Io.Zon., 535; Trapp 1986, 40.

192 Io.Scyl., 310; Wortley 2010, 293; Io.Zon. 535; Trapp 1986, 40. John Skylitzes clearly states that the Pechenegs became angry with the agreement concluded between Byzantium and Sviatoslav. The anger of the nomads was probably triggered by the fact that the Rus' ruler, who had caused them to get involved in a terrible war with the Empire, then made peace with it. Cf. Paroń 2009b, 496–497.

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After the peace treaty, Sviatoslav embarked on his return to Rus'. Having ignored the warning of the voivode Sveneld, he decided to sail to Kiev on *monoxyla* canoes. However, at the rapids in the lower reaches of the Dnieper River, the Rus' ruler encountered Pecheneg forces, which forced him to stop his further journey and winter in Belobereg. Since his forces were not prepared for this stay, hunger undermined their strength and morale.[193] In the spring of 972, Sviatoslav attempted to cross the rapids again. This time it ended in tragedy. The prince perished, along with the majority of his forces. Only the units commanded by Sveneld, who probably chose to travel on land, returned safely to Kiev.[194]

As in the case of the invasion of Rus' in 968, many scholars have tried to identify an external power that may have inspired this attack. It is quite commonly assumed, especially by Russian researchers, that it was the result of diplomatic efforts by the court in Constantinople.[195] However, since this hypothesis contradicts the report of John Skylitzes about the mission of Archbishop Theophilos, it should be rejected. The Pechenegs planned the attack on Sviatoslav on their own. A desire for revenge, resulting from the failure of the Kiev expedition of 968, as well as the death of their people in the Battle of Arcadiopolis, was most likely sufficient to make them attack an enemy they hated. Adding to these reasons was most certainly the fear of the Rus' state becoming even more powerful.[196] Wilhelm Barthold, based on his analysis of numerous Muslim sources, once stated that the damage done by the forces of Sviatoslav in Khazaria had a profound impact on the Islamic world.[197] It must have also made a significant impression on the nomadic neighbours of Rus', further intensified by the two expeditions to Bulgaria.

The victory of the Pecheneg ruler Kuria, who had killed Sviatoslav Igorevich, was the greatest and most spectacular victory by the nomads over the Rus' state. It provided proof that the Black Sea steppe were still their natural domain.

193 PVL 1, AM 6479 (971), col. 73–74.

194 LeoDiac., IX 12 (p. 157); Talbot, Sullivan 2005, 200; Io.Scyl., 310; Wortley 2010, 294; Io.Zon., 536; Trapp 1986, 40–41; PVL 1, AM 6480 (972), col. 74.

195 Karamzin 1899, 181–182; Grekow 1955, 487; Levchenko 1956, 288–289; Pletneva 1958, 215; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1976, 35; Fine 1983, 187; Karpov 1997, 64–65; Kniaz'kii 2003, 32. Christo Dimitrov (2011, 240) assumes that Bulgarians, inhabitants of Little Preslav, inspired the murder of Sviatoslav. It should be admitted that this hypothesis has a stronger basis in the sources than claims about the alleged involvement of Byzantine diplomacy. Cf. Paroń 2009b, 495.

196 Cf. Paroń 2009b, 494–499 (detailed analysis examining responsibility for the death of Sviatoslav Igorevich).

197 Bartol'd 1963, 688; Grekow 1955, 481.

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However, there were already indications foreshadowing the impending end of their rule in this region, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

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For three quarters of the 10th century, the Pechenegs had been an important element of political relations in Eastern Europe. This is evidenced by the fact that authors from distant lands noted their presence in the region.[198] This ethnos played such an important role because of its considerable military potential as well as the fact that it occupied an area of strategic importance. In the 10th century, the Black Sea steppe became a niche of sorts, encircled by political entities that for various reasons had interests in it and its inhabitants. One can hardly resist the impression that the Pechenegs were often quite passive in these political manoeuvrings and relied mostly on their instincts in their external relations. This was largely determined by their segmented and acephalic internal organization. This does not mean, however, that the nomads were merely tools to be used by neighbouring countries. Their relations with the Byzantine Empire demonstrate this very clearly. They were never clients of Constantinople, and became a lasting ally relatively late, i.e., early during the independent reign of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. This alliance most likely lasted until the death of the Emperor, that is, until the end of 959. Earlier, they cooperated only on an occasional basis (the attempt to use the nomads against Simeon in 917). It is difficult to say whether the Byzantine-Pecheneg alliance continued during the reign of Romanos II and Nikephoros II Phokas. It was clearly strained during the reign of John Tzimiskes, but soon, thanks to the mission of Archbishop Theophilos, it was restored. The murder of Sviatoslav, committed against the advice of the Constantinople emissary, however, clearly showed that the Pechenegs did not intend to obey the orders of the Emperor when they did not suit their interests. The relations of the nomads with other political powers were no different.

When they attacked Kiev in 968, or four years later when they murdered the Rus' prince, their actions were primarily motivated by their own interests. In the absence of hard source data, there is no justification for trying to prove the intervention of any external power, such as Byzantium or the declining Khazar Khaganate. The relationship between the Pechenegs and the khaganate in its

198 Apart from Mas'ūdī, who considered the Pechenegs to be the most militant of the Turkic peoples, they are named by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub and Liutprand of Cremona as one of the most important ethne in south-eastern Europe. Cf. ibn Yaqub, 51, 52; Mishin 1996, 189, 190; Liutprand., I 11 (p. 9).

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final years is unclear. The nomads most likely benefited from the trade contacts which had developed within the *Pax Chazarica*, but this does not prove their dependence on the Khazars. But the Pechenegs were not their enemies either. In 965, when Sviatoslav was destroying the foundations of the Khazar system, they most likely took a neutral stance. They were soon to suffer the consequences of their passivity.

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CHAPTER 6

Decline of the Pechenegs' Power on the Black Sea Steppe

6.1 The Rus', Pechenegs and Uzes (972–1036)

The murder of Sviatoslav did not initiate a series of bloody confrontations between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs. The prince's death seems paradoxically to have contributed to a brief restoration of a balance in relations between this steppe people and the Rurik Dynasty. Such a state of affairs can be explained to some extent by the political situation which had developed in Kievan Rus' after 972. This was the result of an earlier decision by Sviatoslav to divide the principality among his three sons. The oldest, Iaropolk, took the throne in Kiev, Oleg received the lands of the Derevlians, and Vladimir, having accepted an invitation from the Ilmen Slavs, ruled in Novgorod.[1] Following a period marked by an uneasy balance, Iaropolk's aspirations to consolidate power became increasingly apparent. Late in the 970s, he attacked the lands of the Derevlians and, after murdering Oleg, extended his rule into this area. Upon hearing news of these events, and probably lacking sufficient military power to effectively counter his brother's attacks, Vladimir fled, temporarily handing over Novgorod to Iaropolk.[2] He soon returned at the head of a Varangian mercenary army. After regaining control of the lands he had inherited, he set off for Kiev and quickly conquered the capital.[3] Iaropolk took refuge in Rodnia, a town on the Ros', from where he was lured out and murdered by the Varangians. In ca. 980 Vladimir became ruler of all of Kievan Rus'.[4]

The rivalry among Sviatoslav's sons had most likely limited the expansion of Kievan Rus'. In addition, the eldest son wished to protect his home front against attacks by the Pechenegs, so he most likely entered into some kind of agreement with them. It is difficult to say whether the war-like steppe-dwellers participated in any of Iaropolk's military expeditions, but there are

1 PVL 1, AM 6478 (970), col. 69; AM 6481 (973), col. 74.
2 PVL 1, AM 6485 (977), col. 74–75.
3 PVL 1, AM 6488 (980), col. 75–77.
4 PVL 1, AM 6488 (980), col. 77–78.

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reasons to believe that he maintained friendly relations with them.[5] The words of Iaropolk's courtier Variazhko, who during the siege of Rodnia warned the prince against his brother Vladimir's malevolent intentions, seem to testify clearly to this fact: 'My Prince,' he said, 'they will kill you. Flee rather to the Pechenegs and collect an army.'[6] After Iaropolk's assassination, Variazhko supposedly fled to the nomads and later fought alongside them against Vladimir.[7]

The ascension of a new ruler did not necessarily result in an immediate flaring of tensions on the southern borders of Kievan Rus'. Accounts from *The Primary Russian Chronicle* concerning the first years of Vladimir's independent rule, indicate intensive efforts on his part aimed at bringing back under Kievan rule, which had been weakened as a result of internal fighting, certain East Slavic tribes (expeditions against the Viatichi[8] and Radimichi[9] dated to the early 980s), as well as an expansion of Rus' westwards and northwards (expeditions against the Liakhs[10] and the Iatvingians[11]). It was not until the end of the 980s that a substantial change supposedly took place in relations with the steppe-dwellers. Rus' chronicles point to 988 as the year the prince of Kiev initiated the construction of a system of fortifications protecting Kiev's distant foreground in the south and southeast. At about the same time fortifications were most likely also constructed on the Sula, Stugna, Oster and Trubezh

5 The *Nikon Chronicle* contains a record, dated 979 (AM 6487), according to which *kniaz'* Ildeia, of Pecheneg descent, enlisted to serve Iaropolk. PNL, 39; Sielicki 1968, 264–265 (note 1). However, the reliability of this information, as well as much other data on the Pechenegs in the *Nikon Chronicle*, compiled in the first half of the 16th century, is often questioned. Cf. Melnyk 2013, 151–158.

6 PVL, 1, AM 6488 (980), col. 78. Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 93.

7 PVL 1, AM 6488 (980), col. 78.

8 PVL 1, AM 6489 (981), col. 81–82.

9 PVL 1, AM 6490 (982), col. 82.

10 PVL 1, AM 6489 (981), col. 81 The purpose and character of this expedition is subject to controversy. In Polish historiography, mainly due to the works of Stefan M. Kuczyński, there is a perception that this expedition was of a peaceful nature. At the same time, the researcher questions the credibility of the part of the chronicle that concerned Vladimir's capturing the so-called Cherven' Towns. In his opinion, no Polish-Rus' fighting took place in 981. The aim of the expedition was merely to conclude a peace agreement. In his later works, the scholar adds that the arrangement was directed against the Pechenegs, who were supposedly particularly dangerous to both Rus' and Poland. See Kuczyński 1949, 114–122; 1953, 1–13; 1962, 233–252. The majority of researchers, however, accept the purpose of the expedition as stated in the chronicle, although its dating, identification of the 'Liakhs' mentioned in it and the borders of the area seized by Vladimir have been discussed. See Franklin, Shepard 1996, 157; Kowalczyk 2000, 55–65; Matla-Kozłowska 2008, 324–5, 328–9; Wołoszyn 2010, 89–91; Jusupović 2017, 38–46.

11 PVL 1, AM 6491 (983), col. 82. Cf. Łowmiański 1973, 219.

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Rivers.[12] Rus' sources also record in the year 991 the building on the Irpin' River of Belgorod, a fortified stronghold intended to be the centre-piece of Kiev's southern defences.[13] An in-depth, detailed analysis is not required to conclude that the task of this defence system was to contain the Pechenegs' attacks. This is revealed in information provided in *The Primary Russian Chronicle*:

> He gathered together the best men of the Slavs, and Krivichians, the Chuds, and the Vyatichians, and peopled these forts with them. For he was at war with the Pechenegs, and when he fought with them, he often overcame them.[14]

There is no doubt that the most frequent and engrossing events in the last decade of the 10th century for the inhabitants of Kievan Rus' were nomad raids. According to *The Nikon Chronicle*, the Pechenegs invaded the Kievan Rus' in 990, but were repelled, incurring significant losses.[15] They launched another invasion threatening Vladimir's rule in 992, attacking from the side of the Sula River. Rus' troops blocked their path near fords on the Trubezh and were once again victorious.[16] The defeat of the Pechenegs must have been a devastating one, because they abstained from further incursions for three years, resuming their attacks in 996. This time the nomads proved they remained formidable opponents, defeating Vladimir's army near Vasil'evo on August 6th. The scale of the Kievan prince's defeat seems to be confirmed by his later erecting the Church of the Sacred Transfiguration as a votive offering for his miraculous salvation.[17] An expedition to Novgorod 'after upland troops with which to fight the Pechenegs' organized the following year additionally indicates that Vladimir's soldiers must have suffered significant losses at Vasil'evo.[18] The Rus' ruler's absence provided an opportunity for the Pechenegs, who began a siege of Belgorod. His nomadic adversaries ultimately withdrew into the steppe after a prolonged blockade, having achieved nothing.[19] *The Nikon Chronicle* mentions another attack on Belgorod, dated to 1004. Vladimir dispatched relief forces under the command of Aleksandr Popovich and Ian Usmoshvets, but no battle

12 PVL 1, AM 6496 (988), col. 121. Cf. PVL 2, 343; Kuchera 1987, 175.
13 PVL 1, AM 6499 (991), col. 122. Belgorod covered an area of 105 hectares. Cf. PVL 2, 346; Kuchera 1987, 71–3; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 172.
14 PVL 1, AM 6496 (988), col. 121. Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 119.
15 PNL, 58 (AM 6498). Cf. PVL 2, 345.
16 PVL 1, AM 6500 (992), col. 122–124.
17 PVL 1, AM 6504 (996), col. 124–127.
18 PVL 1, AM 6505 (997), col. 127.
19 PVL 1, AM 6505 (997), col. 127–129.

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took place, because the Pechenegs, having learned about the approaching Rus' army, ended their siege and withdrew to their own settlements.[20] The presence of Aleksandr Popovich, one of the main heroes of the Rus' *bylina*, indicates that these oral epic poems were a main source of information about these events.[21] Such a state of affairs calls for scepticism in terms of the dates and historicity of the events they describe. Nevertheless, in the first years of the 11th century Rus'-Pecheneg relations were still characterized by fierce hostility. Not even a short relaxation in tensions would take place until 1008, following the mission of St. Bruno of Querfurt.[22]

During the decades marking the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries there were a number of fierce military clashes between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs. The almost complete lack of information in *The Primary Russian Chronicle* about other forms of political activity by Kievan Rus' seems to be a sign of the fierce intensity of these clashes. The sole exception is mention of an expedition by Vladimir against the Croats in 992.[23] All of this proves that the war with the Pechenegs was the Rus' prince's main concern during these two decades.

It is thus worth looking into the reasons behind the nomads' fierce aggression. The standard hypothesis, one definitely overused by researchers, is the influence of some external entity. This explanation, however, should be firmly rejected. It is difficult to identify a political entity that could have been interested in the outbreak of a drawn-out conflict between the Pechenegs and Kievan Rus'. It was certainly not the Byzantine Empire. Vladimir's problems with the Pechenegs began at the time when Rus'-Byzantine relations were closer than ever, culminating in the baptism of Kievan Rus' and a marriage that united the Macedonian dynasty and the Rurikids. This allowed for a period of long-term cooperation between Constantinople and Kiev.[24] Given such a situation, it seem unlikely that Byzantium would have harboured a desire to provoke a conflict between the Pechenegs and Kievan Rus'.[25]

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20 PNL, 68 (AM 6512); PVL 2, 354.

21 PVL 2, 354; Sielicki 1968, 302 (note 1). Cf. Melnyk 2013, 152–153. In the *Nikon Chronicle* there is a mention, dated 1001 (AM 6509), of both heroes killing some outstanding Pecheneg (*bagatyr*) and many of his brethren, and about the arrival of a Pecheneg Prince, Rodman, with his three sons to Rus'. However, the reliability of this data is questionable. PNL, 68.

22 Bruno, 100. Cf. Morgunov 2010, 62.

23 PVL 1, AM 6500 (992), col. 122.

24 PVL 1, AM 6496–6497 (988–989), col. 109–122. Levchenko 1956, 340–385; Ostrogorski 1967, 255; Łowmiański 1973, 222–223; Poppe 1976, 197–244.

25 Paul Stephenson (2003, 111, 129) suggests it is likely that Basil II's diplomacy was intended to create antagonisms between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs. However, to confirm his assumptions the researcher, refers to accounts in *De administrando imperio*, which

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One must therefore look for another cause for the escalation in the Pechenegs' aggression. Its source most certainly lies in the bilateral relations between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs, and more specifically, Vladimir's policies towards them. The prince was often contrasted with his father: opposite a great warrior, worthy of the epic tradition, whose life was suddenly interrupted, stood the founder of the new order, a 'new Constantine'.[26] Such a juxtaposition, although it holds a great deal of truth, should not obscure the major similarities between the two rulers. The same reasons that led Sviatoslav to leave Kiev and attempt to settle on the Lower Danube led Vladimir to anchor himself in the 'mother of Rus' cities'. Trade was an important source of income for both rulers. Some of the military expeditions organized by Vladimir in the early period of his independent rule clearly seem to have served the purpose of bringing Kiev into a wider circle of trade. This could have been the purpose of his campaign against the Ledzanians, especially if we combine this with his conquest of the so-called Cherven' Towns and his expedition against Volga Bulgaria in 985.[27] The Rus' ruler could, of course, also count on benefiting from trade along the route that ran 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', particularly during the period of his close political cooperation with Constantinople. Due to its location, Kiev had the assets required to become an important trade centre. However, it also faced one major stumbling block: its location on the border of the forest and forest-steppe zones. This made the city a kind of a forward outpost, a point of contact between settled and nomadic peoples. We need to remember that according to information provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Kievan Rus' was a one-day march from Patzinacia.[28] In terms of the development of trade, such a position in a state of peace was a blessing, but in times of war – a curse, especially given that a well-developed trade centre attracted potential attackers. Bearing in mind Vladimir's own and his father's experiences, he probably understood these circumstances perfectly well. Therefore, if he intended to make Kiev a great capital and trading centre for his country, he had anchor himself in it.[29] This task had to be accomplished at the expense of the nomads. A huge investment project was initiated by Vladimir that included not only the expansion of the city and its fortifications,[30] but also the creation of an extensive protective foreground for

reflect the general, timeless principles of Byzantine policy towards the empire's northern neighbours.

26 PVL 1, AM 6523 (1015), col. 130–131. Cf. Poppe 1999, 229; 2007, 1–3; Shepard 2010, 176.

27 PVL 1, AM 6493 (985), col. 84.

28 DAI, XXXVII 47 (p. 168/169).

29 Cf. Franklin, Shepard 1996, 169–180.

30 Ioannisyan 1990, 288–294; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 154.

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the capital, which consisted of several lines of ramparts with a total length of more than 500 kilometres, more than 100 fortified settlements, and numerous open settlements inhabited by the agricultural population. The latter were located in the vicinity of fortifications and served as an economic base for new strongholds.[31] As a result of this immense investment project and the social engineering that accompanied it, there was a permanent shift in the Rus' state's borders of more than 100 kilometres to the south of Kiev, to the banks of the Ros' and Sula Rivers.[32] The new borders isolated large areas of the forest steppe that had previously been the sites of the Pechenegs' summer encampments. This most likely pushed the nomads further south. Bruno of Querfurt writes that during his missionary journey, he first encountered nomads on the third day after passing the Rus' border-area fortifications, to which he had been escorted by Vladimir for two days.[33] It is not known where exactly he crossed them, but it seems that the missionary meant their southernmost extension.

These phenomena were accompanied by the development of water transit on the Dnieper River. River harbours were built in the vicinity of Viatichev on the Dnieper, and the strongly fortified stronghold of Voin' was established on the Sula River, not far from its confluence with the Dnieper.[34] A considerable intensification of inland shipping is also evidenced by the establishment of a large Rus' settlement on Velikopotemkin Island at the mouth of the Dnieper River.[35] The existence of this settlement indicates a permanent Rus' presence on the northern shores of the Black Sea, another manifestation of which was the capture of Tmutarakan. It is unknown exactly when this took place, but probably not later than the early 11th century.[36]

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31 Kuchera 1987, 71–3; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 172; Morgunov 2010, 64–65. Kowalczyk 1969, 149–156, 157–158; 1989, 180–187. Elżbieta Kowalczyk rightly points out that a significant part of the so-called Zmievy Valy (Serpent's Wall) already existed before Vladimir's times, which means that the Rus' ruler and his successors did not always build new ones, but often adapted old fortifications to their own needs. The researcher also criticizes the chronology of the construction of ramparts proposed by Mikhail Kuchera, who associates their construction almost exclusively with the rule of Vladimir the Great and Iaroslav the Wise. Despite these generally accurate remarks, it should be stated that during the reign of both rulers extensive investments took place, the aim of which was to broaden and protect the foreground of Kiev.

32 Morgunov 2010, 65.

33 Bruno, 99.

34 Kuchera 1987, 56, 79 (fig. 44), 80; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 170–171.

35 Sokul'skii 1980, 71; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 178. The settlement on the island, which at the peak of its development reached a size of four hectares, is sometimes identified with Oleshe, present in Rus' chronicles. PVL 1, AM 6592 (1084), col. 205.

36 *The Primary Chronicle* mentions the 'positioning' of Prince Mstislav in Tmutarakan in an entry dated 988 (PVL 1, AM 6496, col. 118). However, this information is presented

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Vladimir is said to have briefly captured the Byzantine city of Kherson around 989.[37] The city could have been seized by order of Emperor Basil II[38] or against his will in order to enforce the fulfillment of matrimonial obligations previously accepted by Constantinople, concerning the marriage of Vladimir to the emperor's sister Anna.[39] Regardless of which interpretation we adopt, it is worth remembering that the Rus' ruler attacked a city that maintained trade contacts with the Pechenegs.[40]

The southward shift of the Kievan Rus' border into the steppe in itself had to be considered *casus belli* by its war-like neighbours. Added to this, however, were other activities by Vladimir that further irritated the nomads. The intensification of political and trade contacts with the Byzantine Empire at the end of the 10th century led the Rus' to more frequently cross the steppe, which the Pechenegs considered their exclusive dominion. Events such as the Kherson expedition or the Rurikids' settling in Tmutarakan clearly harmed the economic interests of the Pechenegs. Of course, it is difficult to determine unambiguously which party bears greater responsibility for the outbreak of fighting. The traditional interpretation assumes that the expansion of the fortification

as a part of the characteristics of the 12 sons of Vladimir the Great and the territories assigned to them. Such a situation does not allow for precise dating of the capture of Tmutarakan by the Rus'. The chronicler's intention was rather to connect this mention with the whole period of Vladimir's reign. At another point, Mstislav is mentioned as the master of Tmutarakan only in 1022, (PVL 1, AM 6530, col. 146), but it is very likely that the prince already ruled there earlier. Many researchers date the time when the city was captured to the end of the 980s. Cf. Iakobson 1964, 59–60; Gadlo 1994, 79–81 (late 986–half of 987); Chkhaidze 2008, 286 (year 988). For a more cautious dating, closer to 1022: Shepard 1977–1984, 205; 2006, 33. Cf. also chapter 5.4 of the present book.

37 PVL 1, AM 6496 (988), col. 109–112; LeoDiac., 175. The dating of this event in the Rus' tradition is probably incorrect.

38 Poppe 1976, 197–244; 1978, 3–22. The researcher assumes that Vladimir stood at the walls of Kherson by orders of Emperor Basil II, in order to subjugate the rebellious city, which had previously been supported by the usurper Bardas Phokas.

39 This is a traditional interpretation, supported by Rus' writings, which assumes that Basil II tried to withdraw his consent for the marriage between Anna Porphyrogenita and Vladimir, which led the latter to attack Kherson. Recently, this view was defended by Dimitri Obolensky. See Obolensky 1989, 244–256; 1993, 108–113.

40 The scale of damage caused by Vladimir's invasion is subject to discussion. Researchers of older generations were inclined to assume that the city, which never regained its former glory, was completely destroyed at that time. See Talis 1958, 114 (note 54); Iakobson 1959, 65–66, 283; Poppe 1976, 239; 1978, 18; Bartoli, Kazanski 2002, 663. However, these interpretations are challenged by Alla Romanchuk, who claims that significant damage to Kherson should not be associated with Vladimir's expedition, but with a natural disaster – an earthquake. Romanchuk 1989, 182–188; 2008, 406–409. On trade, cf. Chapter 4.2 of this work.

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system in the foreground of Kiev was a consequence of the nomads' aggression. It is impossible not to notice, however, that the plans the Rus' ruler carried out threatened the Pechenegs' interests. It is also worth remembering that we are viewing the Rus'-Pecheneg conflict from the perspective of a biased source, representing only Kiev's point of view. It is therefore risky to deduce the sequence of events solely on its basis. On the other hand, the implementation of Vladimir's plans required carrying out the investments described above. Moreover, Kiev's hopes for peaceful coexistence with the Pechenegs were largely dashed following the experiences with the nomads during the military campaigns fought between 968 and 972.

The changes on the Black Sea-Caspian steppe caused by the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate benefited the Rus' prince but clearly weakened the Pechenegs. The fall of the Khazars, as pointed out in the previous chapter, meant the disappearance of a barrier hindering the migration of nomads. As a consequence, at the end of the 10th century, the Uzes, long-time rivals of the Pechenegs, were able to move onto the eastern stretches of the Black Sea steppe. *The Primary Russian Chronicle* records their cooperation with Vladimir during his expedition against the Volga Bulgars.[41] This fact raises the question of whether the cooperation between these groups during the expedition in 985 was an isolated case or the result of a standing alliance. If the Torks, as the Uzes were called in Kievan Rus', were Vladimir's standing allies, then we have the right to assume that the Rus' monarch benefited from their assistance against the Pechenegs. This hypothesis is probable, but it is difficult to confirm it on the basis of available sources. Rus' chronicles do not mention an alliance between the Kievan prince and the Torks against the Pechenegs. In the context of the information about a joint expedition against the Bulgars, the lack of information on this subject seems meaningful. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that Vladimir was unaware of the benefits to him of a conflict between the Uzes and the Pechenegs. The latter limited their attacks against Kiev most likely due to the threat their own steppe neighbours began to pose. But did Uzes act under the influence of Kievan diplomacy? This question must be left unanswered. There is an irritating tendency by some researchers to treat the steppe-dwellers as puppets in the hands of powerful political players who were behind even the most obvious political behaviour. They would have seen in this case an external impulse for the Pechenegs' actions, dictated by an outside party's interests. But would they need an order from a neighbouring political

41 PVL 1, AM 6493 (985), col. 84. It cannot be ruled out that the first instance of Rus'-Uzes cooperation took place in 965, during Sviatoslav's attack on the Khazars. Cf. chapter 5.4, footnotes 1350–1351.

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power, possibly backed by an offer of gifts, to attack a weakened opponent in order to seize his flocks or parts of his nomadic encampment areas? It seems that answering this question in the affirmative would be an insult to the common sense of the nomads, who may have not been very ethical, but who were clearly pragmatic. In addition, it cannot be ruled out that the Uzes found themselves under pressure from another ethnos, the Cumans, a pressure that had been visible since the first half of the 11th century.[42]

In order to analyze the clashes between the Pechenegs and the Uzes that eventually forced the former to leave the Black Sea steppe, we must make use of indirect data. Rus' sources do not allow us to investigate the chronology of the changes that were taking place on the steppe. The data found in Byzantine historiography, on the other hand, refers to the relatively late stage of the fighting, when the Pechenegs had already lost half of their territory to the Uzes.[43] Given this situation, it is difficult to overestimate the value of archaeological data. The material gathered mainly by Romanian and Moldovan researchers seems to indicate that sites of Dridu culture, especially in the region between the Prut and Dniester Rivers, begin to disappear in the early 11th century. While earlier we can speak of cohabitation between farmers and nomads, in the period in question there is a pronounced exodus of the former from the steppe and forest-steppe.[44] Their place was probably assumed by the Pechenegs. A similar course of events has prompted some researchers to accept the thesis that the nomad control of areas west of the Dniester River came relatively late. While this may be true in terms of a permanent presence, the nomads' political domination could have occurred, and probably did, much earlier. However, losses incurred in the east, and perhaps also in the north due to Vladimir's politics, caused the nomads to take control of less attractive areas in Moldavia. Political domination thus began to be accompanied by settlement (if this word can be used for nomads). Needs arising from their extensive herding activates also made the previous state of cohabitation impossible.

The start of these changes dates back to the first half of the 11th century. The fighting between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs discussed above reached its peak in the late 10th century. By the beginning of the 11th century, the situation had clearly become calmer. If not for information recorded in *bylina*, we would not know about any major Pecheneg invasion of Kievan Rus'. It is also puzzling that the steppe-dwellers were inclined to enter into the peace agreement

42 Cf. Pritsak 1968, 163.

43 See Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 37–38); Wortley 2010, 426–427.

44 Diaconu 1970, 37–48; 1975, 237; Spinei 1975, 274; 1986, 103; Mănucu-Adameştanu 2001, 87; Postică 2007, 102–103, 126–127, 142; Cf. Paroń 2009, 459–460.

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arranged by Bruno of Querfurt. Although accounts of the 1010s include characteristic references to wars between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs, the nomads were most often caught up in the struggles among rival factions of Rurikids. The Pechenegs would launch their final, unaided expedition against Kiev in 1036.[45]

The beginning of the 11th century brought marked changes to the Black Sea steppe. The Pechenegs were the group most affected by these changes. They had steadily reduced their activity in the north and elements of the ethnos had begun to migrate to the western periphery of the Black Sea steppe. These events should be associated not only with failures they experienced in their conflict with Kievan Rus', but also, and perhaps above all, with pressures from the Uzes. The first clashes with this tribe may have taken place as early as the late 10th century, but they most likely intensified during the early 11th century. It is not possible to describe the Pecheneg-Uzes conflict during this period in detail. It is also impossible to say exactly when and what part of the Pechenegs' eastern encampments might have been lost to the Uzes. We know that in the 1030s at the latest they were forced off the left bank of the Dnieper River. Some researchers assume this displacement could have occurred much earlier, as early as the late 10th century,[46] but the basis for such an interpretation is weak. Meanwhile, it is certain that the socio-political organization of the Pechenegs described by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus had been severely weakened as a result of defeats suffered at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries.

It was during this turbulent period that Bruno of Querfurt appeared among the pagan Pechenegs with the intention of converting them to Christianity. There is a strong view in Polish historiography that this missionary project was undertaken in close cooperation with Bolesław I the Brave. It was also supposed to involve tasks that were *par excellence* political in nature. This was because Bruno, allegedly acting as an intermediary of the Polish ruler, helped negotiate an alliance with the Pechenegs that brought substantive results over the next decade. The agreement with the Pechenegs was most likely aimed at Kievan Rus' and was designed to protect the eastern flank of the Piast state against a potential attack at a time when Bolesław I the Brave's main forces were involved in a war with Henry II, which had been ongoing since 1007.[47]

45 PVL 1, AM 6544 (1036), col. 150–151.

46 Pletneva 1958, 215.

47 A similar perception of Bruno's of Querfurt mission definitely dominates in Polish historiography. See Zakrzewski 1925, 223–225, 306; Grabski 1964, 250–252; Strzelczyk 1999, 163–165; Tyszkiewicz 1997, 48, 51–2, 54, 58; 1998, 42–45; 1999, 222–224. Recently, however, the latter researcher stopped attributing non-religious goals to Bruno's expedition,

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The problem of Bruno's possible entanglement in Bolesław I the Brave's eastern politics, to which we will return below, raises questions about the earlier relations between the Piasts and the Pechenegs. Almost one hundred years ago, Stanisław Zakrzewski went so far as to state that 'Bolesław maintained friendly relations with the Pechenegs'.[48] This view needs to be verified, however. The history of the Piast dynasty's contacts with the Pechenegs seems to be shorter and much less eventful than is usually believed. Let us start with the fact that it is unclear whether the Piast state neighboured the Pechenegs. This inevitably evokes a still unsettled dispute over the formative processes that shaped the territorial boundaries of the early Polish state, and particularly its eastern and southern borders. This dispute seems to be far from being resolved, yet it can be assumed that the Piasts took control of the most southeastern region, between the upper Bug and the San, relatively late. Researchers who date this event the earliest assume that it took place at the end of the 970s. However, Mieszko probably quickly lost a part of this territory, referred to as the so-called Cherven' Towns (ca. 981).[49] At the same time, the furthest northwestern ends of the Pecheneg territory were, as Michał Parczewski proves, located in the northern end of the Podolian and Dniester Uplands, on both sides of the watershed separating the Dniester and Bug river basins.[50] This observation – especially when we take into account the fact that we are dealing

in particular, diplomatic actions against the Rus'. See Tyszkiewicz 2009, 70, 103–104. Some representatives of Russian-language historiography (especially Soviet historiography) also saw Bruno as a tool of Piast or Western European (Latin) politics: Pashuto 1968, 34–35; a gentler version: Karpov 1997, 327–332. Similar views can also be found in German-language historiography based on a Marxist paradigm: Widera 1959, 374–375. For recent attempts to re-evaluate the missionary's intentions: Paroń 2013a, 167–178; Kollinger 2013, 187–202; 2014, 61–86.

48 Zakrzewski 1925, 224, 307. Alexander V. Nazarenko assumes the existence of an early (at least since 992) alliance between the Pechenegs and the Piast dynasty. However, the researcher does not present any hard arguments based on sources. Nazarenko 1993, 155; 2001, 473.

49 Matla-Kozłowska 2008, 324–325, 328–329; Kowalczyk 2000, 58–59 (dates this event to 992); Jusupović 2017, 45–46 (the Piasts lost the so-called Cherven' Towns at the end of the 10th century). Nearly all researchers assume, however, that in 981 Vladimir attacked the territory of the Ledzanian tribe: Labuda 1988, 209–211; Parczewski 1991, 27–31; Poleski 2005, 33; Wołoszyn 2013, 91.

50 It is worth remembering, however, that in his reasoning the researcher refers not to archaeological premises, but to geographical ones (the range of the forest steppe area): Parczewski 2007, 170.

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with a mobile community which spent only a part of the year in the forest steppe zone – justifies acceptance of the thesis that the territory of the steppe-dwellers in question was not adjacent to that of the Piast dynasty, or that the only period when the two shared a common border was during the brief rule of the Piasts over the territory known as the Cherven' Towns (late 970s–981(?) and from 1018 to ca. 1031). Therefore, the importance of the Pechenegs to the foreign policy of the first rulers of Poland should be assessed with great caution.

There is no extant data on the times of Mieszko I concerning his relationships with the Pechenegs. Henryk Łowmiański, however, considered Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg's mention that a camel was offered as a gift to the young Otto III by Mieszko during the Diet of Quedlinburg (986)[51] to be indirect proof of the existence of a relationship between the Polish ruler and the world of the steppe. Łowmiański also allowed for the possibility that an alliance between Poland and the Pechenegs against Kievan Rus' could have been made as early as the 980s. However, it is unreasonable to consider Thietmar's remark about the exotic animal to be evidence of Mieszko's political contacts with the nomads, as it is difficult to prove that the aforementioned camel was delivered by the Pechenegs.[52] Even Łowmiański himself admitted that his hypothesis was not well-founded.

Toponomastic data seems to confirm the Pechenegs' presence in Poland. The number of toponyms assigned to them, especially in comparison with other nomadic peoples, however, is very modest. This is limited to five localities in the area of the Upper Vistula River.[53] The alleged existence of an area known as *Silva Pieczyngarum*, which, according to Tadeusz Lewicki was located between the Łukiew and Strwiąż Rivers, right-bank tributaries of the Dniester River, is doubtful.[54]

The territory of today's southern Poland may have been the target of Pecheneg military expeditions. Groups of nomads could have rather easily

51 Thietmar, IV 9 (p. 141). Cf. Łowmiański 1973, 567.

52 Cf. Chapter 4.2 of this work.

53 Cf. part of the following chapter devoted to the presence of the Pechenegs on the Polish lands.

54 Lewicki 1948, 32. S.M. Kuczyński also followed the doubtful suggestions of this outstanding arabist: 1962, 243; 1965, 42–45. For a critical position: Parczewski 1991, 42–43; 1996, 27; Fenczak 2010, 43–44; Nalepa 2001, 37 (note 232). The last researcher rightly pointed out that the phonetic form of the toponym sounds highly suspicious. The author of these words, for his part, wishes to add that none of the Latin sources known to him has preserved the name of the Pechenegs in a similar form.

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reached this area travelling along the watershed of the Dniester and the Bug, and then through the Przemyśl Gate.[55] It is probable that expeditions of this kind were undertaken as early as the 10th century. The rationale for such a conclusion is information, though somewhat indirect, provided by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus about Pechenegs invasions of 'White Croatia'.[56] It was also supposedly attacked by Magyars, called 'Turks' in the source, and 'Franks', which should be identified with the Kingdom of Germany, the successor state to East Francia. In *De administrando imperio* there is also information that this land was located far inland, 30 days' journey from the nearest sea, known as the 'dark' sea. The location of White Croatia cannot be defined precisely on the basis of the above description, and thus, various claims have placed it in today's Czech Republic and Slovakia, in Lesser Poland (by the upper Vistula river), and in eastern Subcarpathia.[57] This land can also be identified with the Přemyslid monarchy, which some researchers claim could have extended its influence in the mid-10th century to areas of today's southern Poland. Czech rulers allegedly controlled a significant part of the trade route which led from the east through Kraków and Prague to Regensburg.[58] The latter circumstance would have made White Croatia an attractive target for the nomads' armed raiding expeditions. However, if this was the case, in the mid-10th century it would have been the Přemyslids, and not the Piasts, who had to deal with the Pechenegs' invasions.

Nevertheless, the conquest of Lesser Poland and Silesia by Polish rulers probably did not lead to any significant changes. There are even indications that suggest the Pechenegs' activity in this region might even have increased. Since the nomads, under increasing pressure from the Uzes, had sent forces to the south-western borders of their territories to attack the Byzantine Empire,[59] it seems likely that a similar situation could have occurred in the north-western borderlands. However, a complete lack of any such mention in written sources raises doubts. And while this does not rule out the possibility of Pecheneg invasions in the southern territories of the Piast dynasty in the late 10th and early 11th centuries, the intensity of such activity could not have been substantial,

55 Tryjarski 1975a, 614–615; Tyszkiewicz 1986, 316; Makohonienko 2011, 41–42.

56 DAI, XXXI 83–91 (p. 152).

57 DAI-Com., 130; Labuda 1961, 255–256; Swoboda 1990, 69; Maiorov 2006, 79.

58 Matla-Kozłowska 2008, 219–239. For a sceptical position on the size of the Czech state and its influences in southern Poland: Kowalczyk 2000, 65–73.

59 See below.

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since it left no record.[60] The presence of armed nomads, however, appears to have been confirmed by archaeological evidence.[61]

Therefore, the Pechenegs were most probably known to the court of Bolesław I the Brave. The question remains, however, whether the Polish monarch considered them valuable allies and whether he used the mission of Bruno of Querfurt to make an alliance with them. The latter refers several times to the Polish ruler in honourable terms in his writings, which has inspired a conviction among contemporary researchers that there was a particularly close relationship between these two great figures. Rhetorical hyperbola aside, it should be noted that the high level of respect that Bruno seems to have had for the Piast monarch was a product of his commitment to missionary work.[62] This does not mean that Bruno supported the objectives of Bolesław's political plans, much less that he was ready to carry them out.[63] He was a sufficiently strong personality with extensive contacts among the European elites of the time to act independently and reject tasks that did not correspond with his aspirations or were incongruous with his spiritual formation. It is therefore unlikely that he would have undertaken purely political projects that could have made his missionary activity more difficult. Meanwhile, persuading the Pechenegs to form an alliance with the ruler of a neighbouring country could have aroused distrust in Vladimir, without whose support it was impossible to succeed in his conversion efforts among the steppe-dwellers. The Rus' prince

60 The Chronicle of Greater Poland includes an interesting mention. After the death of Mieszko II, in the period of the actual fall of the Piast dynasty, the Polish lands supposedly were subject to invasions by the Tatars (*Tartari*) and other pagan nations. The author of the note, written in the 13th century, certainly committed a serious anachronism. In the 1030s, the Tatars certainly could not have invaded Polish lands, which prompts contemporary researchers to emend the chronicle record and assume that the cause of the misery was another nomadic people. Witold Świętosławski assumed that the actual aggressors were the Pechenegs. Thus, he corrected the completely unfounded suggestion of Brygida Kürbis, according to whom the invaders were the Cumans. Świętosławski's correction is definitely more justified, but it cannot be accepted without reservations. It is in particular the context in which the invasions of pagans on Polish lands were mentioned that raises doubts. This information was included in the chronicle as one of the arguments presented to Pope Benedict in order to obtain his acceptance for Prince Casimir to leaving the monastery and return to Poland. This means that the whole story is part of the legend of Casimir I the Restorer becoming a monk, which is now considered improbable. Chr.Pol.Mai., 19, 143 (note 126); Świętosławski 2006a, 24–25.

61 Świętosławski 2006a, 20–27, 120–122.

62 Karwasińska 1972, 100–103; Michałowski 2016, 205–206.

63 On differences in the plans and intentions (including political ones) of Bruno and Boleslaw the Brave: Wenskus 1956, 179, 182–3, 190, 194f.; Karwasińska 1972, 100–101; Lotter 1997, 173; Michałowski 2016, 194–204; Trawkowski 2005, 86–88, 91–92; Pleszczyński 2011, 160–162.

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did indeed benefit, including in a purely political sense, from Bruno's missionary work. Not only did he make peace with his troublesome neighbours, but in the event of further progress in the Christianization of the Pechenegs, he counted on gaining influence with them, as the bishop ordained by Bruno to serve them was closely connected with the Rus' church.[64] It should be noted that the fruits of Bruno's mission were in sharp contrast to the tasks originally assigned to him, allegedly carried out for the benefit of Bolesław the Brave. His behaviour would be clearly traitorous to his principal, who would consider him to be a *persona non grata*.[65] Meanwhile, it is known that after completing his mission with the Pechenegs, Bruno visited the court of the Polish ruler.[66] This stay, dated to the turn of 1008/9, is the only certain, i.e., the source-certified, case of Bruno staying in Poland,[67] which also suggests that the view that the Saxon missionary's cooperation with the Piast monarch was particularly intimate should be verified.

Bruno of Querfurt probably decided to go to the Pechenegs on his own. He made this decision during his stay in Hungary, where, as he writes in his *Letter to King Henry*, he 'sat for a long time in vain'.[68] Having not received support for his missionary plans at the court of Stephen I, he made his way to Kievan Rus' to seek it there. His direct journey from Hungary to Kiev can be supported by Bruno's own accounts. The logical premise for such a missionary itinerary is to seek support at European courts which maintained contacts with the world of the steppe, so that they could provide organizational support for the evangelization mission and, in case of success, support the budding church organization among pagans. The omission of Bolesław the Brave seems to be significant, it might suggest that his relationship with the nomads was not very intense. Vladimir's attitude, as Andrzej Poppe already wrote, indicates that a specific kind of ecumenism was still predominantly present at the Kiev court, which meant Bruno was simply seen as a Christian clergyman, and not as an agent representing the interests of Rome.[69] A month's delay before the missionary left for the steppe could have been caused by the Rus' prince's concern about his safety. Political reasons or Vladimir's alleged mistrust of the Latin missionary, causes too often suggested in contemporary historiography, can safely be rejected as the reason for the delay. This delay, or rather period of waiting, may have been due to a very prosaic cause: bad travel conditions on the steppe.

64 Bruno, 100. Cf. Poppe 1968, 188–189; 1999, 228; 2007, 16–17; 2008, 56.
65 See Paroń 2013a, 164, 177.
66 Bruno, 100, 103.
67 Cf. Strzelczyk 1997, 220, 222; Pleszczyński 2011, 149–150.
68 '[…] ubi diu furstra sedimus […]'. Bruno, 98.
69 Poppe 1999, 227–229; 2007, 18; 2008, 57.

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Contrary to the opinion of Rev. Walerian Meysztowicz, it is clear that Bruno did not cross into the lands of the Pechenegs on February 22, 1008.[70] The forest-steppe then was covered with a thick layer of snow and the nomads had moved their flocks far to the south. An expedition to the steppe at that time of the year would have been a suicide mission. Bruno probably did not set out until the spring. His time in Kiev should be attributed, at least to a certain extent, to the necessity of having to wait for spring to arrive. His missionary activity would therefore continue for five months between late April/early May and late August/early September.

An attempt to recreate the route followed by Bruno leads for the most part to strictly hypothetical conclusions.[71] The missionary himself confirmed that he left Kiev and was led to the border by Prince Vladimir.[72] We do not know if he crossed the river and arrived on the left bank of Patzinacia. In Bruno's *Letter to King Henry II*, we find an enigmatic statement that he 'travelled around three parts of their land, though we did not touch the fourth', from which came 'messengers of the more noble people (*meliores*)'.[73] By the latter phrase he may have meant representatives of the aristocracy of one of the Pecheneg groups, or 'better' in the moral sense, i.e., ready to be baptized.[74] Both interpretations, however, are not mutually exclusive, which inclines us to conclude that the messengers from the fourth part of Patzinacia not visited by the missionaries were representing members of the local aristocracy who wanted to declare their readiness to accept the Gospel.

The question of why Bruno and his collaborators did not reach one of the Pecheneg regions is bound to pique the interest of researchers. It may have merely been due to their relatively short stay on the steppe, or the region could have been the site of military activity or other disturbances at the time. The only area where armed conflict would seem to be likely to occur, due to pressure from the Uzes, would be the encampments on left-bank Patzinacia. This

70 Meysztowicz 1958, 491. The researcher gives a similar date for Bruno's arrival in the land of the Pechenegs based on the fact that the missionary chanted the *Petre amas me? Pasce oves meas!* responsory (John 21:15–17). Its content allegedly referred to the feast of the Chair of St. Peter, which supposedly was on the day when he crossed the Rus' border. In fact, the words of the responsory in this case carried a much broader missionary symbolism. See Poppe 1999, 229–230; 2007, 20–21; 2008, 59–60; Paroń 2013a, 176.

71 The last project of this kind: Dudek 2010, 241–254. The structure offered by the researcher is, unfortunately, quite controversial and based on a weak premises.

72 Bruno, 99 (v. 2–12).

73 Bruno, 100 (v. 6–7).

74 Alexander V. Nazarenko (1999, 315) seems to adopt the first of these interpretations as well. *Meliores* in the Russian translation were rendered as seniors, elders (*stareishiny*).

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hypothesis, although not without basis, is nevertheless merely speculative. It is impossible to propose even the most general theories about the Pecheneg tribes that Bruno visited. Defeats in their conflicts with Kievan Rus' and the Uzes may have upset the socio-political order that existed previously among these nomads, which makes it impossible to determine the exact shape of their society in ca. 1008.

As mentioned above,[75] Bruno's mission was a success, but Vladimir also benefited from it greatly. This is evidenced by his readiness to send his own son to the nomads as a hostage to guarantee a peace agreement he had concluded with the Pechenegs.[76] Since the time of Nikolai Karamzin it has been traditionally assumed that this son was Sviatopolk.[77] Indeed, his close ties later with the Pechenegs seem to confirm this assumption. The behaviour of *Senior Ruzorum*, as Bruno of Querfurt referred to Vladimir, made a strong impression on the missionary. It cannot be ruled out, of course, that his actions were dictated in part by religious motivations, but purely political considerations clearly played an important role. Of course, Bruno performed a great service for the Prince of Kiev in both regards.

75 See Chapter 4.4 of this work.

76 Bruno, 100.

77 Strzelczyk 1999, 165, 167; P.P. Tolochko 1999, 67; Poppe 1995, 13; 2007, 17 (note 35). Concerning a similar identification, doubts were raised by A.V. Nazarenko (1999, 316). The Russian researcher claimed that Sviatopolk, as the eldest son of Vladimir, allegedly already ruling his own local duchy in 1008, could not have been taken into account. According to A.V. Nazarenko, it was usually underage sons who were sent as hostages. The last statement seems doubtful, because in similar circumstances the decision depended on the political interest and not on any custom. We also do not know when Sviatopolk took residence in Turov. Alexei Karpov (1997, 330) presents a similar line of reasoning to A.V. Nazarenko and suggests that some son of the Rus' ruler, unknown by name, was sent to the Pechenegs. Alexander Holovko (2000, 46) also shares the view held by Nazarenko. The Ukrainian researcher also assumes that Boris could have been the hostage taken in 1008. This is indicated by his supposedly good contacts with the steppe people. However, the basis for this hypothesis is even weaker than in the case of Sviatopolk. The fact that Boris was sent by his dying father to face the Pechenegs 'going to Kievan Rus'' is hardly proof of good relations between the young Rurikid and the nomads. A much more convincing hypothesis is that Boris' presence in Kiev with his terminally ill father and his entrusting his son with command over the units sent against the steppe people proves Vladimir's intention to make him his successor. Hrushevs'kii 1905, 3; Poppe 2003, 143; Karpov 2001, 71. Cf. Kollinger 2011, 72–73; 2014, 38–41. The last researcher considers Sviatopolk's presence among the Pechenegs an unprovable hypothesis, but proposes to identify Vladimir's unknown son as Mstislav of Tmutarakan, even though there is absolutely no available information about his relationships with the nomads in question (!). Kollinger 2014, 160–161 (note 252).

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It seems rather unlikely that Bolesław the Brave was involved in Bruno's mission. However, the Pechenegs twice supported his military expeditions against Kievan Rus'. This raises the question of how the Polish ruler's cooperation with the nomads came about. The link seems to have been Vladimir's son Sviatopolk. In the Rus' tradition, where he was given the nickname *okaiannyi* – 'the accursed' – he is portrayed as a typical villain. The son of a former nun, Iaropolk's Greek concubine who was 'inherited' by Vladimir after his brother's death, was presented as a son of two fathers.[78] He was also accused of murdering Vladimir's sons Boris, Gleb, and Sviatoslav during a fight for succession in 1015.[79] Sviatopolk's close contacts with the Pechenegs and conflicts with Vladimir seem to complement his negative portrayal. His stay among the nomads certainly allowed him to establish ties of friendship with some of their leaders, and these ties were probably maintained after Sviatopolk's return to Kievan Rus'. It is difficult to say when he made this return. If the motive behind sending him as a hostage to the Pechenegs was to get rid of one of the pretenders to the throne and open the road to succession to the children of Vladimir and Anna Porphyrogenita, her death in 1011 probably made it easier for him to return to Kievan Rus'.[80] Soon after his return, Sviatopolk granted rule over the Dregovichi and took residence in their main stronghold of Turov.[81] The location of his domain, which comprised the western part of the Rus' lands, made him a neighbour of the Piast state. Sviatopolk quickly established contacts with Bolesław the Brave, which were cemented by his marriage to the daughter of the Polish ruler.[82] This alliance was meant to strengthen the forces of the Rus' prince in the upcoming rivalry for the Kievan throne. Sviatopolk began to conspire against Vladimir, who proved strong enough to imprison him along with his wife and Bishop Reinbern.[83] These events, dated to 1013, are perceived by contemporary researchers as the first phase of the struggle for the Vladimir's legacy.[84] It cannot be ruled out that Iaroslav, who ruled Novgorod and openly defied his father a year later, was also involved in the conspiracy.[85]

78 PVL 1, AM 6488 (980), col. 78. Cf. Franklin, Shepard 1996, 190–191; Poppe 2003, 142.

79 PVL 1, AM 6523 (1015), col. 132–140. Cf. Poppe 2003, 146–147 (critical of the Russian tradition attributing all the blame to Sviatopolk, points to the fact that well-informed Thietmar remained silent); Nazarenko 2001, 453–455 (does not question the traditional version of the events in question).

80 PVL 1, AM 6519 (1011), col. 129. Cf. Poppe 1995, 13; 2003, 143.

81 PVL 1, AM 6496 (988), col. 121.

82 Thietmar, VII 72 (p. 487). Cf. Grabski 1956, 175–176, 178–180.

83 Thietmar, VII 72 (p. 488). Cf. Poppe 1995, 14.

84 Poppe 1995, 13–15; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 184–185.

85 PVL 1, AM 652 (1014), col. 130.

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However, what is most important here is the fact that the imprisonment of Sviatopolk and his immediate circle led Bolesław the Brave to undertake an expedition against Kievan Rus'[86] (usually dated to the summer of 1013) with the support of the Pechenegs. Thietmar calls the nomads allies (*fautores*) of the Polish ruler, but it seems that their participation in the expedition resulted from an alliance with Sviatopolk, not Bolesław. The allies of the Rus' prince simply banded together to aid him, laying waste to large swaths of the Riurikid's realm during their invasion.[87] This intervention, however, did not yield any significant results, and none of those imprisoned regained their freedom as a result of it.[88] Moreover, misunderstandings arose between the Pechenegs and Bolesław which ended tragically for the nomads.[89] It is usually assumed that the cause of the Pecheneg revolt was dissatisfaction due to the lack of spoils or that they had received insufficient quantities of loot.[90] Indeed, in the nomadic mentality, one of the basic motives for undertaking a military expedition was plunder. If acquiring an abundance of spoils was synonymous with a successful invasion, then failure to achieve this goal was bound to raise objections.[91] The events surrounding this first military expedition against Rus' would determine quite unambiguously the attitude of Bolesław the Brave toward the Pechenegs. There are numerous indications that the Polish ruler treated them as short-term subordinates who were required to obey him unconditionally, while any symptoms of insubordination were to be punished mercilessly. It was definitely not a political partnership of equals in which the interests of both parties would be taken into account. From the perspective of Bolesław the Brave, the Pechenegs were mercenaries, the murder of whom did not entail any serious consequences. It seems, therefore, unlikely that the Piast monarch maintained contacts with the nomads in question either before or after the 1013 expedition.

Bolesław's retreat, however, did not alleviate the situation in Kievan Rus'. The invasions of the Pechenegs continued. It is difficult to say whether the nomads demanded that Sviatopolk, as their ally, be handed over to them, or whether they only exploited the growing succession crisis for the purpose of looting. *The Primary Russian Chronicle* includes a remark that in 1015 the Pechenegs invaded Kievan Rus' once again. Vladimir, who was dying at that time and could not fight against the aggressor, sent his son Boris in his place.

86 Thietmar, VII 73 (p. 488); Cf. Grabski 1956, 181–182; Poppe 1995, 14.
87 Thietmar, VI 91, (p. 383).
88 Grabski 1956, 190; Poppe 2003, 144.
89 Thietmar, VI 91, (p. 383).
90 Zakrzewski 1925, 251; Cf. A remark by Z.M. Jedlicki (1953, 445, note 481).
91 See Chapter 4.4 of this work.

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But unable to locate his opponent, he returned to Kiev.[92] It is difficult to say why the Pechenegs withdrew without a fight. It is possible they did so upon learning of Vladimir's death and the seizure of power by their ally Sviatopolk. Perhaps their task was only to draw soldiers loyal to Vladimir and Boris out of Kiev. In fact, the rebellious Iaroslav also benefited from the nomads' intervention, because the army gathered against him ultimately did not march on Novgorod.[93]

The death of Vladimir the Great was the start of an all-out struggle for succession. Circumstances benefited Sviatopolk, who was supported by the Pechenegs. He was freed from prison and managed to arrive in Kiev ahead of the other pretenders to the throne, though if the Rus' chronicles can be trusted, the inhabitants of the capital city treated him with reserve.[94] However, Sviatopolk had sufficient support to take the throne. The murder of three of his rivals, Vladimir's sons Boris, Gleb, and Sviatoslav, allowed Sviatopolk to become the ruler of Kiev.[95] His main rival for full sovereignty over all of Kievan Rus' was Iaroslav, who resided in Novgorod. The year 1016 brought the first clash between them. The battle took place near Liubech, on the left bank of the Dnieper River in the Principality of Chernigov. Despite the support of the Pechenegs, Sviatopolk was defeated,[96] which forced him to flee to Poland shortly afterwards.[97] This course of events gave Boleslaw the Brave justification to undertake another military expedition against Kievan Rus'.

The 1018 campaign involved a wider range of political considerations than the previous expedition in 1013. Boleslaw had become more deeply involved in Rus' affairs thanks to the enthronement of Sviatopolk, with whom the Polish ruler shared close connections. He also had the military and political support of Henry II. The Holy Roman Emperor had granted his support because a successful attack on Kiev would give him an important advantage in his rivalry with the Byzantine Empire for control of southern Italy. Finally, Boleslaw the Brave's delegation to Constantinople helped him incorporate his political project into the mainstream of European politics.[98]

92 PVL 1, AM 6523 (1015), col. 130, 132.

93 Cf. Karpov 2001, 76–77. The researcher rightly notes that the Pecheneg diversion served the interests of Sviatopolk and Iaroslav, but his thesis that the main culprit was Boleslaw the Brave, allegedly allied with the nomads, is doubtful.

94 PVL 1, AM 6523 (1015), col. 132.

95 PVL 1, AM 6523 (1015), col. 132–140.

96 PVL 1, AM 6523 (1015), col. 140–141.

97 See below note 1486.

98 Zakrzewski 1925, 300–305; Grabski 1956, 202–208; Poppe 1995, 17; Salamon 1993, 114–120; Kollinger 2014, 211–226.

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According to Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg, the expedition included a nomad force numbering 1000 Pechenegs. Its task was most likely to attack the city of Kiev from the south. The steppe people carried out this attack, but despite significant damage from fires caused by their siege, the inhabitants of Kiev did not surrender the city. Thietmar gives credit for this city's determined defence to 'swift Danes' (*veloces Dani*) who were in Kiev at that time, and who effectively resisted the nomads, then opened the city gates only after the arrival of the main forces led by Bolesław the Brave (14 August 1018).[99] Judging by the ethnonym, these may have been Scandinavian merchants who were active along the trade route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', and who thus had prior experience with nomadic groups.[100]

The participation of the Pechenegs in the Kiev expedition of 1018 seems to prove that the events of the first Rus' campaign did not disrupt their contacts with Bolesław the Brave. A similar interpretation seems to be supported by information from Thietmar, according to whom the Pechenegs' attack on Kiev had been solicited by Bolesław (*hortatu Bolizlavi*).[101] However, a more likely explanation for their participation is one involving Sviatopolk, who maintained close contacts with the Pechenegs both before and after the expedition of 1018,[102] and so most probably provided their military support for this expedition. The campaign was carried out under Bolesław's command, which would help explain the information provided by Thietmar. Moreover, it seems that during the 1018 campaign the Pechenegs were a secondary factor and had no significant influence on the course of events in its aftermath.

Disagreements between the Polish ruler and his son-in-law resulted in the retreat of the Polish forces. *The Primary Russian Chronicle* contains information about actions carried out against the 'Liakhs' (Poles) on the orders of Sviatopolk himself.[103] Bolesław, realizing that his further presence in Kievan Rus' was pointless and even dangerous, decided on a planned retreat. Sviatopolk thus regained his political freedom, but lost the support of the

99 Thietmar, VIII 32 (pp. 621, 623).

100 It was suggested, however, that these could also have been mercenaries Iaroslav provided to Kiev. Cf. Riasanovsky 1964, 288–297.

101 Thietmar, VIII 32 (p. 530).

102 The second time he was expelled from Kiev, Sviatopolk undoubtedly escaped to the Pechenegs (cf. below). It is not impossible, however, that during his first exile he also escaped to the steppe first, and only from there make his way to Poland. The first escape to the Pechenegs is mentioned in *The Novgorod First Chronicle*. NPL, AM 6524 (1016), 15. Cf. Franklin, Shepard 1996, 186.

103 PVL 1, AM 6526 (1018), col. 143–144.

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Poles, without which, it turned out, he was unable to maintain power in Kiev. The Rus' chronicles describe his fall in a concise account:

> Svyatopolk thus reigned alone in Kiev, but Iaroslav attacked him again, and Svyatopolk fled among the Pechenegs.[104]

On the basis of the above passage, it is difficult to determine whether Bolesław's recent ally even attempted to challenge the forces marching from Novgorod.

The final outcome came the following year, when Sviatopolk made his final attempt to seize Kiev. This time the Pechenegs were his only allies.[105] The clash took place by the Alta River, a tributary of the Trubezh. After a long and extremely bloody battle, Iaroslav achieved victory.[106] The scale of the defeat of the Pechenegs can be indirectly ascertained by the fact that they once again halted their invasions of Kievan Rus'.

The events of the years 1013–1019 indicate a clear change in the balance of power between Kievan Rus' and the Pechenegs. The majority of nomadic invasions dating to that period ended in failure for the nomads. The 1018 expedition ended up being their only moderate success, though its outcome

104 PVL 1, AM 6526 (1018), col. 144; Cross, Scherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 132.

105 An interesting matter, although very difficult to verify, is the participation of the Vlachian population in the struggle for succession after the death of Vladimir the Great. Victor Spinei has claimed for many years that the Vlachs fought for Sviatopolk together with the Pechenegs. The Romanian researcher refers to information found in the story of Eymund (*Eymundar þáttr*), which is a subplot in the Scandinavian literary tradition, based around the person of Olaf the Holy, the King of Norway. The protagonist of the story, related to the Norwegian monarch, konung Eymund, is a mercenary in the service of a Rus' ruler named Jerizleifr, whose main enemy is his brother Búrizlafr. The identification of the first of the antagonists is not a challenge – it is probably Iaroslav the Wise; the second person seems to have the traits of Bolesław the Brave and Sviatopolk. It is particularly important for the present discussion that in the decisive phase of the struggle Búrizlafr was supported by Tyrkir, Blökumenn 'and other numerous evil peoples'. Priad, 98 (text), 112 (Russian translation). V. Spinei identifies the first ethnonym as the Pechenegs, the second as the Vlachs, and dates this event to 1018–19. Spinei 1973, 65–66; 1975, 270–271; 2003, 125; 2009, 104–105. The nature of the source, however, requires reservations. The story of Eymund, although it seems to refer to the events of the 11th century, could have been written in the 12th or even at the end of the 13th century. Its text is known from a manuscript dating back to the end of the 14th century (*Flateyarbók*). In addition, *Eymundar þáttr* recreates historical events very loosely. The figure of Búrizlafr, who is killed by the protagonist, is a very clear example of this. The story of Eymund is therefore not suitable for recreating the course of the succession struggle in Kievan Rus' in the years 1015–1019, which in consequence, also raises doubts about the information about the involvement of the Vlachs in these events. Cf. Poppe 1995, 8 (note 19); Żmudzki 2004, 15–19.

106 PVL 1, AM 6527 (1019), col. 144–145.

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was largely determined by their cooperation with the army commanded by Bolesław. Their own expeditions no longer posed a major threat to Kievan Rus', whereas their later defeat on the Alta River proved that Kiev had finally gained the upper hand militarily.

A sixteen-year period with no mention of the Pechenegs in *The Primary Russian Chronicle* begins in 1019. This gap is partly filled with information from Byzantine sources, which as of 1027 resumed reporting on their military undertakings. However, the period between 1019 and 1027 remains a complete mystery. This is even more telling since the rivalry among Vladimir's progeny for the dominance over Kievan Rus' did not end with Sviatopolk's defeat. Another pretender who manifested aspirations to reign over Kiev was Mstislav of Chernigov, who ruled in distant Tmutarakan, near the Strait of Kerch.[107] His position was by no means hopeless in his rivalry with Iaroslav, but he was unable to take control of Kiev mainly due to opposition from the city's inhabitants.[108] In 1026 the brothers came to an agreement and divided power over Rus' between themselves, setting the border between their domains along the Dnieper River. Iaroslav received the left-bank part along with Kiev, while Mstislav took the right-bank part and Chernigov, which he expanded significantly.[109]

This rivalry between the two princes was not exploited in any way by the Pechenegs. Neither of the Rus' rulers turned to them for help, which is additional proof that the combat and political value of the nomads had declined significantly.[110] It can be assumed that one circumstance that added to state of affairs was fighting between the Pechenegs and the Uzes, who were increasingly pressuring the former from the east. It is possible that as a result of pressure from the Uzes, the Pechenegs lost their remaining encampments on the left bank of the Dnieper River. A battle between the Pechenegs and Rus' forces on the Alta River in 1019 provides weak support for the hypothesis that the nomads still dominated the areas east of the Dnieper River. In the period that follows, we hear nothing more about the Pechenegs 'coming to Kievan Rus" from the left bank of this river.

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107 PVL 1, AM 6531 (1023), col. 147. Cf. Pashuto 1968, 319 (note 156); Shepard 1977–1984, 204–207; 2006, 31; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 200–201. The quoted researchers assume that Mstislav could have enjoyed the support of Constantinople. Jonathan Shepard further suggests that the Tmutarakan prince and the Byzantine Empire fought together against Khazar survivors in 1016 (Io.Scyl., 354 (v. 90–94); Wortley 2010, 336).

108 PVL 1, AM 6532 (1024), col. 147.

109 PVL 1, AM 6532 (1024), col. 148–149. Cf. Shepard 1977–1984, 208–209; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 206; Karpov 2001, 210–240.

110 In 1023 Mstislav made use of the help of the Kasogians and Khazars.

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The attacks of the Uzes, as well as defeats in their clashes with Kievan Rus' most likely led to a shift in the direction of the Pechenegs' armed incursions. Their attacks may now have also been directed at Poland, as well.[111] Łowmiański pointed out years ago that defensive settlements were at around this time established in the vicinity of the Kraków-Sandomierz borderlands. The chronology of their construction was supposedly determined by two events: the conquest of the so-called Cherven' Towns by Bolesław the Brave and the withdrawal of the Pechenegs from the Black Sea steppe some time after 1036.[112] The Piast ruler may have also intended to seize this region in order to protect Poland from invasions by the Pechenegs. According to some historians, their migration to the north and south-west could have begun much earlier. Dmitrii Rasovski and Geza Feher argue that the Pechenegs had already begun infiltrating Hungary in the 950s or 960s.[113] However, this migration process probably intensified as a result of pressure from the Uzes and the Pechenegs' first defeats in their fight with Kievan Rus', and thus no earlier than the early 11th century. As has already been pointed out, the late 1020s and early 1030s brought about an increase in Pecheneg activity in the Lower Danube region.[114]

Despite the changes described above, the threat of Pecheneg invasions of Kievan Rus' was still very real in the 1030s. The steppe-dwellers still posed a threat to the border territories in the area of the Ros' River. Thanks to information from *The Primary Russian Chronicle* dated to 1031, we know[115] that this region was to serve as an area for settlement by the military, which played a role analogous to that of Vladimir the Great's settlements in the fortified strongholds along the Stugna, Desna, Trubezh, Irpin' and Sula Rivers. The settlers were prisoners of war brought to Kievan Rus' during Iaroslav's military expedition to Poland.

The military fortification of the river Ros' region may even indicate that the Pechenegs resumed their attacks on this area. The events of 1036 should therefore be understood as the culmination of a rise in the Pechenegs' activity on the borders of Kievan Rus', which was spurred by political instability following the death of Mstislav.[116] The Pechenegs attacked following their rules for the art of war. After breaking through the system of border fortifications, they reached Kiev while the Rus' ruler was absent from the city. The city withstood

111 Cf. above.

112 Łowmiański 1975, 47–48.

113 Feher 1921–25, 130; Rasovskii 1933, 5–7.

114 On Hungarian-Pecheneg relations, see the following chapter.

115 PVL 1, col. 150 (AM 6539 (1031): placement of Polish prisoners of war by Ros; AM 6540 (1032): construction of strongholds by Ros). Cf. Karpov 2001, 261–262, 264–265.

116 PVL 1, AM 6544 (1036), col. 150–151. Cf. Franklin, Shepard 1996, 207.

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the siege until Iaroslav returned from Novgorod, and the battle fought on the city's foreground ended in a severe defeat for the Pechenegs, who are said to have then ceased their attacks on Kievan Rus'.[117]

6.2 The Byzantine Empire and the Pechenegs on the Eve of Their Migration to the Balkans

After Sviatoslav's second expedition to the Balkans, there is no mention of the Pechenegs in Byzantine sources for nearly half a century. It is only during a recounting of events dated to 1017 that John Skylitzes mentions an attempt to enlist the support of the Pechenegs in an armed conflict between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire. Having joined forces with Krakras of Pernikos, the Bulgarian ruler John Vladislav planned to invade unspecified Byzantine territories. The two leaders tried to persuade the Pechenegs to join them. When news about John and Krakras' offer reached Basil II, he grew alarmed, but his fears proved unfounded, as the nomads decided not to provide the Bulgarian ruler with military forces.[118] It is difficult to say what guided their decision. It can be assumed that they may have lacked confidence in the ability of the forces of the waning Bulgarian state to carry out a successful campaign against the Byzantine Empire. Skylitzes makes no mention of any diplomatic efforts on the part of Constantinople that might have influenced the Pechenegs, so we can assume that Byzantine diplomacy was not a major factor in their decision.[119]

The nature of the Pechenegs' relationship with the Byzantine Empire at that time is rather unclear. There is little information as to whether their alliance, renewed during the mission of Archbishop Theophilos in 971, survived beyond the reign of Emperor John I Tzimiskes (d. 976). The actions of the Pechenegs between 968 and 972 indicate that they remained difficult, even unpredictable partners, which may have discouraged Byzantine diplomats from cooperating with them. Virtually nothing is known about the relationship between the Pechenegs and the Byzantine Empire under the rule of Basil II. The first years of his reign were full of domestic turmoil, which significantly limited the state's external dealings. In theory, however, Constantinople's long-standing conflict

117 PVL 1, AM 6544 (1036), col. 151. Cf. Tolochko 1999, 70–71; Karpov 2001, 294–297.

118 Io.Scyl., 356 (v. 28–30, 24–36).

119 Paul Stephenson (2000, 81; 2003, 129) assumes that the Pechenegs decided not to support John Vladislav and Krakras as a result of the intervention of Byzantine diplomacy. However, this is only guesswork.

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with the Kometopouloi Dynasty ruling Bulgaria[120] should have prompted Basil to seek assistance from the Pechenegs. However, there is no evidence of such a request. The events of the late 980s led to a strengthening of the relations between Kievan Rus' and Byzantium. The military aid provided to Basil II by Vladimir during the rebellion of Bardas Skleros bore fruit in the form of a marriage between the Kievan ruler and Anna Porphyrogenita that united the Rurik and Macedonian dynasties. This marriage, along with the resulting baptism of Kievan Rus', ensured a lasting peaceful relationship between the two states.[121] Both the danger of attacks on Constantinople and that posed by Kiev's efforts to conquer southern Crimea were reduced to nearly nothing. In addition, the empire was given the opportunity to enlist large contingents of Rus' Varangians for its military expeditions. Such an army, comprised of six thousand nomad warriors, was sent against Bardas Skleros and later remained under the command of Basil II. We also know that a Varangian-Rus' army took part in the campaign against the Kometopouloi Dynasty in Bulgaria (991–995) and participated in battles in Syria (999).[122] Such a close relationship between these two empires undermined the *raison d'être* of the Byzantine-Pecheneg alliance. During the reign of Stephen I (998–1038), one of the principles of the Hungarians' foreign policy was maintaining peaceful relations with Constantinople.[123] Byzantium's victory over Bulgaria and annexation of its territory in 1018 marked the final elimination of the threat of Bulgarian attacks.[124] This meant that the events of 989–1018 eliminated all the reasons listed by Constantine VII to justify maintaining an alliance with the Pechenegs. It is very possible that their weakened position, caused by increasing pressure from the Uzes and defeats in their battles with Kievan Rus', would have been seen in Constantinople as a neutral if not favourable circumstance for Byzantine interests.[125] Imperial diplomats could not, of course, cease all contacts with the Pechenegs. Moving the border to the lower and middle Danube regions forced them to maintain such contacts in order to obtain information about their warlike neighbour's intentions and stymie their aggression by either diplomatic or military means. But these new circumstances changed the nature

120 Ostrogorski 1967, 250–252; Treadgold 1997, 514, 516–517, 520, 522–523, 525–528; Stephenson 2000, 58–76 (The last researcher criticises the existing findings on Basil II's policy towards Bulgaria, Samuel and his successors).

121 Ostrogorski 1967, 254–255; Poppe 1978, 3–22. Cf. above note 1408.

122 Levchenko 1956, 382–383; Treadgold 1997, 518, 522; Bonarek 2003, 163–165.

123 Urbansky 1968, 20; Moravcsik 1970, 62; Fine 1983, 196.

124 Ostrogorski 1967, 259; Madgearu 2013, 63.

125 Cf. Angold 1997, 37.

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of their relationship with the Pechenegs; after a period of peaceful isolation, there began a period where they became once again 'difficult neighbours'.

Up until the death of Basil II (1025) no armed incidents on the empire's Danube border are reported. Constantine VIII's independent reign, however, brought the first foreboding events. In 1027, the Pechenegs attacked the *thema* of Bulgaria. Their victims included not only the local people, some of whom were murdered or taken captive, but also local Byzantine troops. Some unnamed *stategoi* and *tagmatarchoi* shared the fate of the civilian population. However, the invaders were quickly overwhelmed by Constantine Diogenes, a *strategos* of Sirmium who had recently been named duke of Bulgaria by the Emperor. The Byzantine commander forced the nomads to withdraw beyond the Danube.[126] Petre Diaconu assumed that the purpose of the Pecheneg invasion was the Niš-Serdica-Eutzoplon region;[127] however, contemporary researchers believe that fortresses on the Danube (most likely Garvăn and Capidava) were also attacked.[128] This expedition may have come as a surprise to the empire, whose elites had grown accustomed to enjoying a relatively good relationship with the Pechenegs. The effects of this first attack after many years of quiet appear to have been quite serious, though not catastrophic. The Pechenegs managed to take a significant number of prisoners, some of whose freedom was purchased the following year by the new Byzantine Emperor Romanos Argyros (1028–1034).[129]

The paying of ransom for abducted subjects may have been accompanied by a peace agreement, because for the next four years the nomads carried out no aggressive actions against the empire. The ascension of a new ruler in Constantinople was also conducive to a realignment of the Byzantine Empire's relationship with the Pechenegs. However, the year 1032 marked the beginning of a series of much more devastating and violent attacks. The first one was directed at Moesia, an area between the Danube and the mountains of the Balkans.[130] The same area was ravaged again two years later, though it was probably plundered much more thoroughly. Next, the Pechenegs, most likely moving west across the northern Balkans and circumventing the mountains, reached the borders of the Thessalonica *thema*.[131] The following year (1035), most likely in winter, the Pechenegs invaded Moesia once again; then, bypassing

126 Io.Scyl., 373; Wortley 2010, 351–352.
127 Diaconu 1970, 41.
128 Mănucu-Adameştanu 2001, 88–91; Madgearu 2013, 116.
129 Io.Scyl., 375 (v. 57–58); Wortley 2010, 354.
130 Io.Scyl., 385 (v. 56–57); Wortley 2010, 364; Io.Zon., 579; Trapp 1986, 67; Mic.Glyc., 584.
131 Io.Scyl., 397 (v. 43–44); Wortley 2010, 374.

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the Balkans to the east, they marched to Thrace and likewise ravaged it.[132] In the spring of 1036, they invaded the Dobrudja region three times, taking five Byzantine commanders into captivity and murdering numerous inhabitants of the area before withdrawing behind the Danube.[133] The fact that during their expeditions between 1032 and 1036, the Pechenegs expanded into ever more distant provinces of the empire seems to confirm that pillaging was the main goal of these ventures. Such an invasion strategy guaranteed the greatest material benefits, since constant attacks on the same areas would only cause the population to flee to regions less vulnerable to attack.[134] The long distances covered by the Pechenegs during these expeditions is confirmed by archaeological data.

The border regions, however, were the most badly affected. In the course of their devastating expeditions, the Pechenegs virtually dismantled the Byzantine defence system along the Danube: Tulcea, Isaccea, Garvăn-Dinogetia, Turcoaia-Troesmis, Capidava, Oltina, Dervent, Popina-Gradiščeto, Gigen, and even Dorostolon (Dristra) fell victim to their raids. Moreover, the following fortresses far from the Danube were also attacked: Constantia, Car Asen, Skala, Središte, Rujno, Okroš, Kladenci, Odărci, Šumen, Kavarna, and Balčik.[135] The events of 1032–1036 share yet another striking feature. The Pechenegs did not display any tendency to settle on the far side of the Danube. They probably realized that the establishment of settlements on Byzantine territory would have forced Constantinople to undertake more decisive military actions, which would have been much more determined than the weak resistance of the garrisons located in the northern Balkans. Having a large Byzantine army directed against them would have meant a long fight for the invading nomads, the end result of which was difficult to predict. As long as the Pechenegs could feel safe on the left bank of the Danube, there was no reason to take unnecessary risks.

132 Io.Scyl., 399 (v. 3–5); Wortley 2010, 376; Io.Zon., 589; Trapp 1986, 73.

133 Io.Scyl., 399 (v. 7–13); Wortley 2010, 376. John Skylitzes gives the names of the leaders taken captive, which were: John Dermokaites, Bardas Pitzes, Leo Chalkoutzes, Constantine Pterotos, and Michael Strabotrichares. Io.Zon., 590, Trapp 1986, 74. Cf. Diaconu 1970, 45–49; Bonarek 2011, 73–74 (note 341); Karpov 2001, 297–298.

134 Diaconu 1970, 43.

135 Madgearu 1999, 435–436; 2013, 117–118; Borisov 2007, 74–75. The data provided by the last researcher seems to prove that the Pecheneg invasions in the years 1032–36 were catastrophic for the Byzantine provinces located north of the Balkan Mountains. Suffice it to say that out of 121 settlements discovered in the present-day Dobrich district, only 11 supposedly survived the raids of the nomads. In the Silistra region (medieval Dristra) out of 72 open settlements and 8 fortified settlements there remained only 3 (sic!). It seems, however, that this destruction resulted not only from the invasions of the 1030s, but also from later migrations and battles, dated 1046–1053.

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All the more so given that in the face of the weakened state of the Byzantine forces along the border, crossing the river to carry out further looting expeditions did not involve much risk.

However, constant fighting with the Uzes to maintain the already tenuous territorial *status quo* in the Black Sea steppe region meant that the Pechenegs' encampments between the Danube, the Carpathian arch and the Dnieper might soon no longer be safe. The Pechenegs' repeated expeditions across the Danube probably led these nomads, like the Bulgars three and a half centuries earlier, to realize that the region resembled the Black Sea steppe in terms of its natural environment, which made it a logical choice for further migration.[136] Thus, according to the iron logic of the migration of peoples, it was clearly only a matter of time before Pechenegs established settlements in the Balkans.

6.3 Pecheneg Migration to the Balkans

The catalyst for such a move was a power struggle within the ethnos, which had been preceded by a new stage in the continuing conflict between the Pechenegs and the Uzes. In addition to their successful expeditions to Dobrudja, the year 1036 also brought the Pechenegs a spectacular defeat near Kiev, after which they ceased to be a threat to Kievan Rus'. The Pechenegs' weakness was due not only to this defeat, recounted in the Rus' chronicles, but also due to pressure from the Uzes. By the 1040s, Pecheneg encampments were already located west of the Dnieper River and, according to information from Skylitzes, they reached as far as the Danube and Pannonia.[137] This mention by the Byzantine chronicler indicates how far west the Pechenegs had been pushed after having lost at least half of their territory to the Uzes. This process of displacement was probably also accompanied by demographic losses. Adding to the problems of these nomads, whose ranks had been decimated by military defeats, in the early 1040s, internal unrest began to spread. Their defeats in clashes with the Uzes seem to have aroused an aversion to the inept and passive tribal aristocracy. The leader of the ethos at that time was most likely Tyrach, son of Bilter, a high-born leader lacking in military skills. According to Byzantine historiography, in times of danger he would seek refuge in the swamps and floodplains of the Lower Danube.[138] Given this situation, which arose as a result of the indolence

136 Waklinow 1984, 45.

137 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 37–38); Wortley 2010, 426–427.

138 Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 39–47); Wortley 2010, 427. Io.Zon., 641; Trapp 1986, 105.

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of the 'highborns', a talented rival from outside their circle was bound to appear. This rival was Kegenes, son of Baltzar, who came from a family of commoners, but proved to be an effective leader in battles with the Uzes, which earned him widespread respect.[139] Tyrach understood that a skillful leader was a threat to his power, so he decided to eliminate his rival. After several unsuccessful assassination attempts, Tyrach's supporters openly attacked Kegenes, who managed to avoid death and fled into the swamps along the Dnieper. He made contact with various tribes and enlisted the support of two out of thirteen of them.[140] Although Tyrach's forces greatly outnumbered his own, Kegenes launched an attack, possibly hoping that some of the Pechenegs would refuse to fight. His calculations were wrong. The defeated Kegenes and his followers anxiously sought protection from Tyrach's retribution. They took refuge on a small island on the Danube located near Dorostolon (Dristra). From there Kegenes was able to make contact with the Byzantine duke Michael Arianites of Paradunavon, and offer his services to the Emperor through him.[141] These last events should be dated to the year 1045.[142]

Most likely motivated by the desire to strengthen his northern border, Emperor Constantine Monomachos (1042–1055), decided to accept the offer of the Pecheneg leader. Kegenes went to Constantinople, where he was received with honours and given the title of patrician (*patrikios*). He was additionally entrusted with three fortresses on the Danube, given a large parcel of land, and accepted as a friend and ally of the Romans. For his part, Kegenes promised to be baptized together with his followers. The ceremony celebrating the acceptance of these new subjects of the empire into the Church was performed in the waters of the Danube by the monk Euthymios.[143]

According to Byzantine sources, 20,000 nomads crossed into the empire.[144] Such a relatively modest number seems trustworthy.[145] The fact that this probably included Kegenes' warriors and their families makes it even more credible. Probably some 4,000–5,000 of them were capable of bearing arms. This

139 Byzantine chroniclers claim that the Pechenegs nearly worshipped Kegenes because of his military talents: Io.Scyl., 455 (v. 47–50); Io.Zon., 641.

140 Io.Scyl., 455–456 (v. 50–60); Wortley 2010, 427; Io.Zon., 641; Trapp 1986, 105–106.

141 Io.Scyl., 456 (v. 60–71); Wortley 2010, s. 427; Io.Zon., 641; Trapp 1986, 106.

142 Michael Arianites became the *dux* of Paradunavon in the same year, in 1045. See Madgrearu 1999, 424; 2013, 122.

143 Io.Scyl., 456–457 (v. 1–14); Wortley 2010, 428; Io.Zon., 641–642; Trapp 1986, 106.

144 Io.Scyl., 456 (v. 66–67); Wortley 2010, 427. A little further on, the same chronicler reports that Kegenes would make expeditions against the followers of Tyrach leading a unit of about 1,000–2,000 people. Io.Scyl., 457 (v. 16–18); Wortley 2010, 428.

145 See Vasil'evskii 1908, 10. Its radical verification is postulated by Oliver Schmitt (2006, 477 (note 32)) and Jarosław Dudek (2007, 119; 2007a, 112).

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was a significant number, which, under a nimble commander could effectively defend part of the empire's Danube border. The settlements of these new allies were said to be concentrated around three fortresses on the Danube.[146] Byzantine sources do not provide any details that would make it possible to locate them more precisely. It is usually claimed that the location of the fortifications assigned to Kegenes' Pechenegs are unknown or that they were located near Dorostolon (Dristra), in the vicinity of the area now known as the 'Ialomița Wetlands' (*Balta Ialomiței*). Some researchers place them at fords in the river located at Dinogetia, Dervent and Capidava. The last of these was destroyed during an invasion by Tyrach in the winter of 1046/7, which would confirm the accuracy of these speculations.[147]

Once he felt secure, the new subject of the Byzantine Empire immediately began to use his newly acquired resources to combat his former compatriots. He attacked the Pecheneg encampments across the Danube in sudden attacks involving 1,000–2,000 armed fighters, killing their warriors and selling women and children as slaves to the Byzantines.[148] It is worth considering here what aim Kegenes might have had in his actions. Did he really consider himself a subject of the emperor, meaning his actions should be interpreted as not merely revenge, but also an indication of a change in his identity? Such an interpretation would mean that Kegenes, as a patrician, friend and ally of the Romans, treated his former brethren as enemies of the empire who had to be combated. There would therefore be no goal behind his actions other than personal revenge and demonstrating his loyalty to the new order of which he had become a part.[149] However, it is also possible to follow a different line of reasoning, one which assumes that Kegenes' military activity after he settled in Byzantium was merely another stage in his struggle for power over the entire Pecheneg ethnos. By switching his allegiance and serving the empire, he gained access to political and material resources that he could use to unite the Pecheneg people under his leadership. Such an ambition seems to be indicated by preserved bronze seals (*bulla*) of Kegenes which were discovered in the citadel in Dorostolon (Dristra). All known copies of the seal feature the figure of St. John the Baptist, referred to as *Prodromos* on the obverse, while

146 Io.Scyl., 456 (v. 9–10); Wortley 2010, 428.

147 Diaconu 1970, 58 (note 162: location unknown, somewhere west of Dristra); Madgearu 1999, 435; 2013, 123 (here, however, Madgearu considers the abovementioned strongholds to be unidentified); Dudek 2007, 118; 2007a. 111–112.

148 Io.Scyl., 457 (v. 15–20); Wortley 2010, 428; Io.Zon., 642; Trapp 1986, 106.

149 In my previous studies I was inclined to see Kegenes' motivation exactly in this way, and thus to treat his behaviour as an example of cultural change and a change in identity. See Paroń 2009, 47–48; 2009a, 472–473.

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the reverse contains a supplication: 'God aid John, *magistros* and *archōn* of Patzinacia, Kegenes'.[150] However, the meaning of this seemingly unambiguous demonstration of a claim to power over the entire ethnos is complicated by a number of circumstances. Namely, all known copies of this seal date back to 1050/51, i.e., the very end of Kegenes' life. Between 1045, when the ambitious Pecheneg crossed the Danube, and the time the seal was fashioned, many events took place that could have led him to change his political plans.[151] The words on the seal are also telling.[152] Kegenes presents himself as a Christian and Byzantine dignitary. He uses his Christian name with his title, while his native pagan name is pushed to the end of the supplication. It is also worth noting that the owner of the seal describes himself as the *magistros* and *archōn* of Patzinacia, and not of the Pechenegs. Kegenes therefore presents himself as the ruler of a territorial district, located in Byzantium, over which he exercises power conferred upon him by the Emperor.

The information we obtain from an analysis of the relic described above is very important, yet it does not provide a sufficient basis for accepting the thesis that this eminent Pecheneg leader became a Roman. Barbarian chiefs accepting Roman honours is a phenomenon known since late antiquity. Their level of willingness to do so was based on the material and political benefits associated with a given position or honorary title.[153] The same could have been the case with Kegenes. It is worth noting that at the time the seal was pressed, the vast majority of the Pechenegs already lived within the territory of the empire. Their settlements could have been referred to as 'Patzinacia' although it should be stressed that the toponym does not appear in Byzantine literature of that time.[154] However, by gaining the right to rule over the area inhabited by the Pechenegs, Kegenes also gained power over the ethnos itself. Kegenes' acceptance of the above-mentioned titles was, therefore, above all an act of political pragmatism, one in which he adapting the methods used in his struggle for power to the circumstances in which he found himself.

150 Jordanov 1992, 79–82; Seibt, Zarnitz 1997, 131–132 (no. 3.2.9); Dudek 2005, 327–328; Madgearu 2013, 123.

151 Cf. Chapter 7 of this work.

152 Dudek 2005, 329–330.

153 Attila held the title of *magister militum*, which justified the tributes paid to him. Cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 182. Frank Arbogast supposedly used his position in the Roman Empire to fight the enemies he had in his home community across the Rhine. Cf. Geary 2012a, 54.

154 Among 11th-century authors it was used only by John Skylitzes, but he meant an area beyond the borders of the empire (Io.Scyl., 375, v. 57–58). Cf. Moravcsik 1983a, 247 (s.v. Πατζινακία).

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It therefore seems that we can cautiously assume that Kegenes' political goal, the details of which might have been subject to tactical modifications depending on the conditions, was nevertheless to gain power over the whole of the Pecheneg ethnos. The logic of political struggle requires, above all, eliminating one's rivals and their closest allies. The attacks Kegenes carried out shortly after settling in the territory of the Byzantine Empire were directed mainly against Tyrach and his most trusted warriors. Kegenes had now become a serious threat to Tyrach in part because he was able to draw upon resources available within the empire to draw a large part or the majority of the Pechenegs to his side. Tyrach was therefore in a very difficult situation. Forced to constantly defend against Uzes attacks from the east, he was now additionally exposed to constant attacks from across the Danube, being carried out by a militant rival. Defending against both threats effectively exceeded his capabilities, so he decided to try to solve the problem by diplomatic means. Tyrach's emissaries who went before the emperor accused him of providing shelter to a renegade who was carrying on a conflict with a people allied with the Byzantine Empire. According to the emissaries, if Constantine wanted to accept Kegenes' service, he should forbid him from attacking his recently abandoned kinsmen. Tyrach ultimately demanded that Kegenes be held in check. If this condition was not met, he threatened to go to war.[155] His arguments are somewhat surprising. The leader of the Pechenegs refers to an alliance with Constantinople, while known events from the 1030s would indicate that both sides were rather in a state of heated conflict. After 1036, however, their relations may have been brought to order. A peace agreement was badly needed both by the empire, which had lost its fortifications along the Danube border, and by the steppe people, who had been weakened by their defeat at Kiev and were threatened by invasion by the Uzes.[156]

However, Constantine Monomachos did not accept the arguments presented by Tyrach's emissaries and did not satisfy his demands. He was fully aware of the fact that such a course of action would result in war, so he began to make preparations for a conflict. He appointed Kegenes and Michael, duke of the Paradunavon *thema*, to observe Ister closely and immediately report any attempts to cross the river. In addition, Constantine sent 100 ships to the Danube to carry out observations of the banks of the river. However, Tyrach waited for Ister to freeze and at the turn of 1046 and 1047 he moved onto the Byzantine coast accompanied by his people. The scale of this migration is

155 Io.Scyl., 457 (v. 20–27); Wortley 2010, 428; Io.Zon., 642; Trapp 1986, 106.

156 The existence of such an arrangement is assumed by Diaconu 1970, 51f.; Malamut 1995, 119; Madgearu 2013, 122.

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confirmed by information provided by Byzantine authors. According to John Skylitzes, 800,000 (sic!) Pechenegs entered the territory of the empire.[157] This number must be treated with great reserve. The chronicler probably wanted to emphasize the great significance of this nomadic migration, but it is hard to believe that its participants were so numerous. Cautious estimations suggest that Tyrach brought up to 100,000 Pechenegs to the Balkans. If one assumes, on the basis of data on Kegenes' migration, that each Pecheneg tribe could have been made up of roughly 10,000 people, i.e., warriors and their families, then a simple calculation shows that the remaining 11 tribes headed by Tyrach could have consisted of more than 100,000 nomads. However, tribal groups are not tactical army units, so their numbers can vary greatly. It cannot be ruled out that not all the Pechenegs entered the territory of the Byzantine Empire as a result of migration between 1045 and 1047. Some nomads probably remained on the left bank of the Danube. Taking these caveats into account, we can estimate that the main bulk of the ethnos that invaded the Balkans, led by Tyrach, consisted of no more than the aforementioned 100,000 people.[158]

The migration of winter 1046/47 was therefore not merely an invasion of the empire, with the additional aim of curbing Kegenes' activities. The need to escape Uzes pressure also played an important role. Skylitzes does not mention this, but this fact was confirmed by Michael Psellos.[159] The rivalry between Tyrach and Kegenes and its later consequences should be considered as a catalyst that accelerated the process of the Pechenegs' leaving the Black Sea steppe.

Having learned about the invasion, Constantine sent the forces from the *themata* of Macedonia and Bulgaria to assist Kegenes and Michael. Meanwhile, after entering the Balkans, the Pechenegs followed their tradition of carrying out wide-scale plundering in the regions through which they marched. Having found a large amount of food in these areas, including wine and especially honey, which was previously unknown to them, they began to greedily satisfy the hunger they had been suffering. New kinds of food and drink, most likely consumed in excess, caused an epidemic of dysentery among the Pechenegs

157 Io.Scyl., 457–458 (v. 27–46); Wortley 2010, 428–429; Io.Zon., 642; Trapp 1986, 106; Io.Maur., 142–147. On the subject of dating this event and subsequent ones, see Kazhdan 1963, 177–184; 1977, 65–77; Shepard 1974, 61–89. J. Shepard defended the traditional chronology, according to which the Pecheneg invasion led by Tyrach took place in the winter of 1048/1049. However, the interpretation of Alexander P. Kazhdan seems to be more justified.

158 Cf. Diaconu 1970, 62 (100,000 newcomers); Ferluga 1979, 54 (over 100,000); Schmidtt 2006, 479 (note 53: no more than 20,000); Dudek 2007a, 113 (in total, 50,000–80,000 Pechenegs entered the empire in the 1040s); 2007, 120 (80,000–100,000 accompanied by their families).

159 Mich.Psell., VII 67 (p. 240); Sewter 1953, 241–242.

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which took a deadly toll on them. Those nomads who survived the disease, were unable to fight for a long time afterward. News of the epidemic reached Kegenes, who persuaded the other chiefs to launch an immediate attack. The surprised nomads were at the mercy of their conquerors.[160] The most radical solution was proposed by Kegenes, who urged the Byzantine commanders to kill all adult men.[161] It seems however that Tyrach's adversary was mainly interested in eliminating the Pecheneg aristocracy.[162] Deprived of their elites, the steppe people would become a relatively harmless, easily controlled ethnos. The Byzantines found Kegenes' suggestion ungodly and barbaric. The Byzantines themselves chose another solution, which consisted of disarming the Pechenegs and settling them on the deserted plains surrounding Naissos (Niš), Serdica (Sofia) and Eutzoplon (Ovče Pole). The nomads would cultivate the land there and pay tribute, as well as provide the emperor with recruits if necessary. The leaders, i.e., Tyrach and 140 other men, were transported to Constantinople. They were received with honours, then baptized, but were not allowed to return to their kinsmen.[163]

This was the means chosen to resolve the Pecheneg question, one intended to transform troublesome nomads into loyal subjects of the Byzantine *basileus*. Subsequent events, which will be the subject of discussion in the next chapter, showed that the expectations of the Byzantine politicians turned out to be unrealistic.

•••

The Pechenegs' loss of importance on the Black Sea steppe and the process of their gradual displacement from this area began after the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate. This was connected with pressure from the Uzes, but also, as is clearly visible in the sources, from the expansion of Kievan Rus'. In the times of Vladimir and Iaroslav the Wise, the Kievan foreground was strongly fortified and extended southwards. Moreover, the activity of Kievan Rus' along the Dnieper trade route most likely also increased, and was accompanied by its establishment of settlements at the mouth of the Dnieper and in Tmutarakan. These facts were considered by the Pechenegs to pose a threat to their sphere of influence, and they reacted to this by attacking Kiev repeatedly. The pressure they put on the capital of the principality was limited by

160 Io.Scyl., 458–459 (v. 46–66); Wortley 2010, 429–430; Io.Zon., 642–643; Trapp 1986, 106–107.
161 Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 67–70); Wortley 2010, 430.
162 Cf. Chapter 4.4 of this work.
163 Io.Scyl., 459 (v. 70–85); Wortley 2010, 430. Io.Zon., 643; Trapp 1986, 107.

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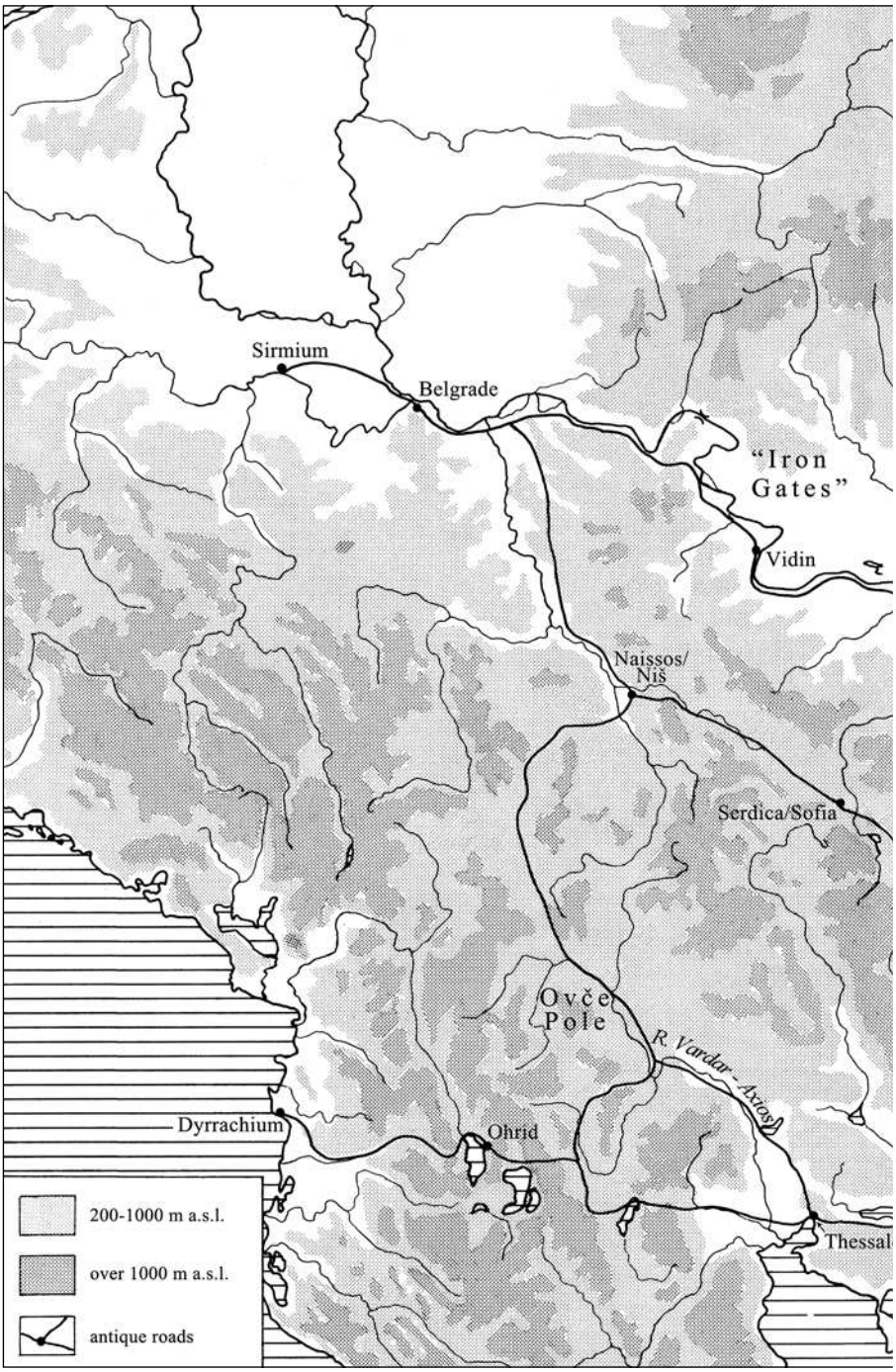

MAP 4 The Balkan Peninsula after the Pecheneg Migration

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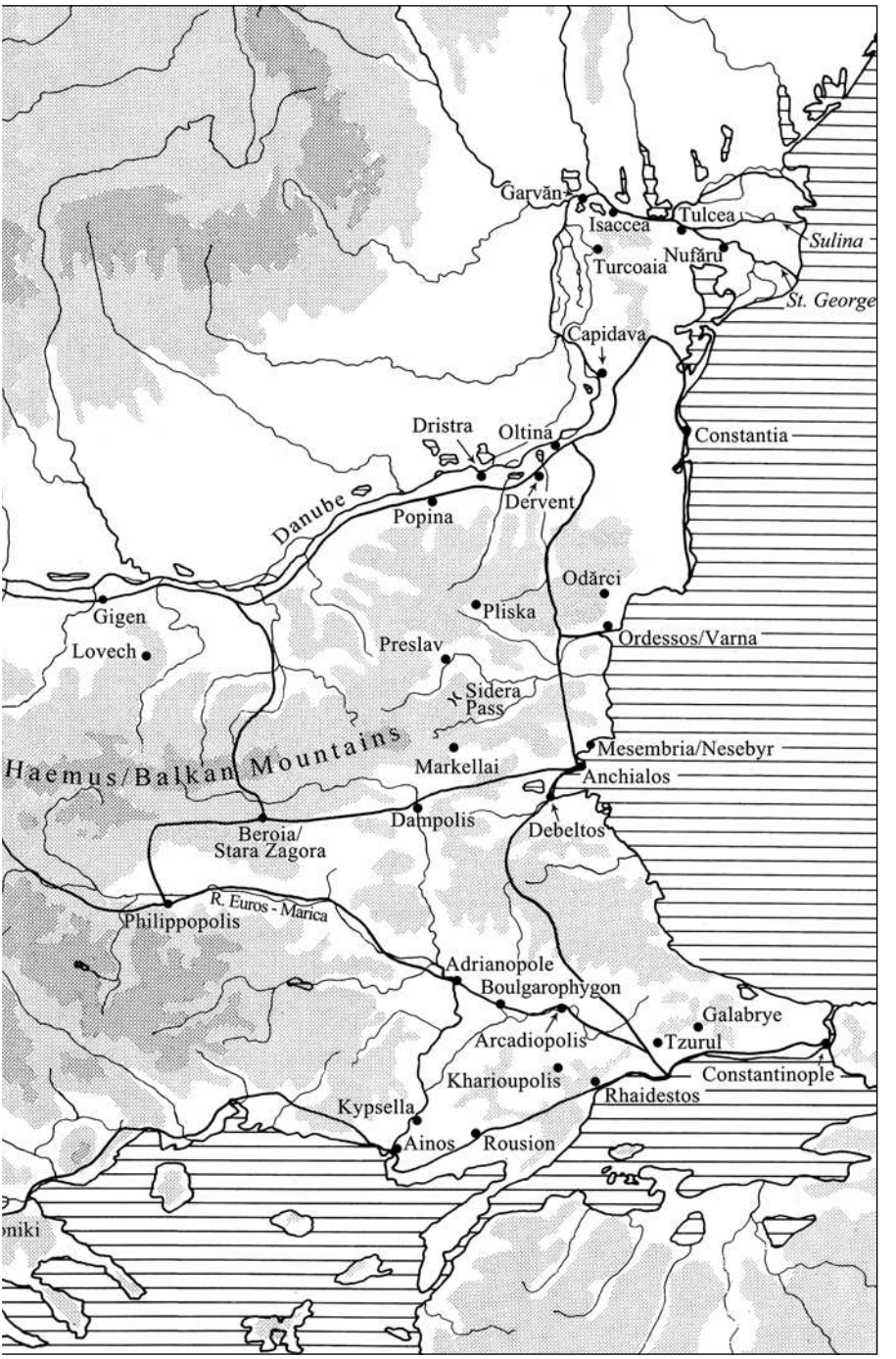

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the conflict they were simultaneously engaged in with the Uzes. In the early 11th century, the Pechenegs suffered their first serious territorial losses, which forced these nomads to gradually move to the western ends of the Black Sea steppe. This process would soon be accompanied by an armed exploration of the Balkan provinces of the Byzantine Empire. For roughly a decade (1027–1036), the Pechenegs repeated their attacks on the Byzantine *themata* (mainly Paradunavon) along the border, as a result of which they completely dismantled the defence system along the empire's Danube border. Their military expeditions at that time foreshadowed the great migration that would occur in two waves in the years 1045–47. This was undoubtedly a momentous event because it ended the Pechenegs' 150-year presence on the Black Sea steppe. Certain events that will be described in detail in the next chapter meant that their migration did not mark the end of the political independence of these nomads. However, their departure for the Balkans severely limited their political significance. The Pechenegs were forcibly removed from a peripheral, but very important steppe niche, one which criss-crossed the spheres of influence of neighbouring states.

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CHAPTER 7

The Pechenegs on the Territories of the States Neighbouring the Steppe

The migrations that took place under Kegenes and Tyrach ended the Pechenegs' existence as an independent ethnos living on the Black Sea steppe. The quality of the nomads' lives now depended largely on their relations with the rulers of the neighbouring states in which they sought shelter. These relations, in turn, depended on the size of the given Pecheneg group and the circumstances of their settling in the given state. The Byzantine Empire most likely took in the majority of the Pechenegs. A smaller but nevertheless visible number sought shelter in the Kingdom of Hungary and in Rus'. It is probable that some groups of Pechenegs reached Poland, but this is not well substantiated by source materials.

The sudden influx of nomads into the Byzantine Empire left the imperial administration with the difficult task of dealing with this migration. Byzantine policy towards the Pechenegs alternated between using violent force and attempting to peacefully integrate and assimilate them. Ultimately, Byzantine politicians opted to employ brutal force to resolve the Pecheneg question. With other states, the process of integration was much less tumultuous, but did not always lead to full acculturation. This was due not only to the aforementioned smaller number of Pecheneg migrants, but also to the fact that their migration was gradual and occurred over a fairly long period of time.

Apart from the Pecheneg groups that were incorporated into neighbouring states, some members most likely never left the Black Sea steppe. This hypothesis is based on the very nature of ethnic migrations, during which smaller groups often leave the main body of the ethnos. Such groups usually choose to stay in their current domain, even if this means submitting to a foreign power. As a result, they become incorporated into a new political body, lose their sovereignty, and usually disappear from written sources. It also cannot be ruled out that some groups of Pechenegs returned to the north bank of the Danube in the latter half of the 11th century. The history of the great migration in 1064 of the Uzes, who raided the Balkan provinces of the Byzantine Empire only to retreat from them a short time later, suggests it is possible that the same phenomenon occurred with the Pechenegs. In such a case, these smaller groups were most likely easily absorbed by other, stronger ethnic groups.

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However, a number of researchers assume that after the migrations that took place under Kegenes and Tyrach, a fairly large and powerful group of Pechenegs remained on the Black Sea steppe and once again became an active force in the late 1060s. The basis for such an assumption is data from Hungarian sources describing nomad raids on the Arpadian kingdom. Some contemporary researchers identify these nomads with the Pechenegs. They believe that the Pechenegs raided Hungary in 1068, 1071, and 1085. Moreover, researchers refer to data gathered by Anna Komnena on 'some Scythians' who crossed the Danube in 1086, as well as to the fact that John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates mention the Battle of Beroia, fought in 1122 with 'the Scythians' by John Komnenos. Information from Hungarian and Byzantine sources will be discussed in detail in later parts of this chapter. At this point, it should be noted that this data is insufficient to support the thesis that there existed a fully sovereign and numerous group of Pechenegs on the Black Sea steppe and the north bank of the Danube after Tyrach's migration.

The late 1040s therefore represents a turning point in the history of the Pechenegs, i.e., the period during which they became part of the states neighbouring the steppe. It seems equally important that the Pechenegs, who were a nomadic people and heavily reliant on extensive herding, were forced to settle on lands whose natural conditions differed significantly from those of the Black Sea steppe. This initiated a process of change in their culture and associated social and political processes. In the case of the large Pecheneg communities in the Balkans, this situation also negatively affected their external relations within this new environment. As a result, the former inhabitants of the steppe proved to be a very troublesome partner for Byzantium.

7.1 The Pechenegs in Byzantium: 1047–1091

7.1.1 *The Rebellion*

The solution applied to new subjects of the Empire by Constantine IX Monomachos and his administration, described in the previous chapter, was regarded as fully effective by Byzantine elites. An expression of this mood can be found in the writings of John Mauropous, bishop of Euchaita, who described events surrounding the arrival of the Pechenegs in the Balkans in a speech written after 21 April 1047.[1] In it he described the nomads as savage barbarians lacking the intellectual, legal, and religious underpinnings of a proper social order. They were capable solely of organizing raids and seizing

1 Io.Maur., 142–147. On the dating of the speech: Lefort 1976, 265.

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anything that had legs as booty.[2] However, the rhetorician was not the only one who depicted the nomads as a community *sine rege et lege*, resembling a pack of wild animals rather than human beings. Other Byzantine authors from the 11th century who described the Pechenegs presented them in a similar way.[3] Mauropous referred to the same literary trope to emphasize the role of Providence, the actions of which had enabled the barbarians to rid themselves of their innate savagery and transform from animals to humans. This miraculous metamorphosis was of course complemented by their baptism. In short, the Pechenegs became part of the Roman nation because, according to the rhetorician, they gave themselves to it just like a river gives its waves to the sea.[4] In this fervent confession of faith in the omnipotence of God, who is capable of turning the most savage barbarian into a civilized man, lay a firm conviction in the great power possessed by the Roman (Byzantine) cultural universe. When the Pechenegs crossed the borders of the Roman *politeia*, they entered an area under the influence of this cultural universe, so it was inevitable that they would succumb to its effects.

This conviction was real and not merely a rhetorical declaration. In the mid-11th century Byzantine elites momentarily held the mistaken belief that calling on the former steppe-dwellers to settle in the highland and upland areas between Serdica and Niš, areas that were certainly far from a promised land for them,[5] and offering the nomad leaders a place among the Empire's elites would make the Pechenegs into loyal subjects. This line of reasoning was completely unrealistic and seems to show that the administration of Constantine IX clearly had no idea with whom they were dealing. The imposition of sudden, rapid cultural change on the Pechenegs simply made them more open to a call to rebel.

Such a call came very soon.[6] In 1048, due to anticipated aggression by the Seljuq sultan, the Byzantine ruler decided to send 15,000 horsemen to

2 Io.Maur., 144 (§ 9, 196[1]).

3 Cf. Malamut 1995, 122–123; Paroń 2011, 127–130; 2018, 226–233.

4 Io.Maur., 143–144 (§ 7–8), 145 (§ 12–13). Cf. Malamut 1995, 121.

5 Schmitt 2006, 480. The researcher assumes that when the Byzantines ordered the Pechenegs to settle in the highlands, they hoped that the steppe-dwellers would get used to the new conditions by shifting from 'vertical nomadism' to 'horizontal nomadism'. The latter meant that in summer, animals would graze in the mountains, whereas in winter they would return to the valleys.

6 For more on the Pecheneg rebellion and the war they waged with Byzantium in the years 1049–1053: Vasil'evskii 1908, 15–24; Zlatarski 1934, 93–108; Diaconu 1970, 64–65, 73–76; Fine 1983, 209–210; Malamut 1995, 124–128; Stephenson 2000, 92–93; Spinei 2003, 135–136; Curta 2006, 296–297; Bonarek 2011, 76–86.

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Iberia.[7] These forces were to be comprised of his newly acquired subjects. The Pechenegs were to be led by their former chiefs: Soutzoun, Selte, Karaman, and Kataleim, who had all been residing in Constantinople. The new units were well armed and their leaders were given valuable gifts by the emperor. The only Byzantine who is known to have accompanied the Pechenegs to the east was Constantine Hadrobalanos, a patrician who acted as their guide.[8] The actions taken by Constantine IX seem to prove that the emperor and his administration trusted the Pechenegs and did not believe they would rebel. This is another point that gives us reason to believe that Byzantine politicians regarded the solutions adopted in the wake of the Pecheneg migration as fully effective. However, their hopes were quickly dashed. The troops sent against the Seljuqs managed to cross the Bosporus and advance a short distance to the east, but at that point, they stopped near Damatrys to deliberate amongst themselves. Some members of the group thought they should march on to Iberia in accordance with the emperor's orders, but the majority opted to either renounce their loyalty, seek shelter in the mountains of Bithynia and repel potential attacks from there, or to return to the Balkans and join the remainder of their ethnos. Ultimately, they were persuaded by Kataleim to choose the last solution, that is, to attempt to re-unify their ethnic group. The Pechenegs tried unsuccessfully to kill Hadrobalanos, who managed to escape and return to the court.[9]

Separated from Europe by the Bosporus, the nomads decided to swim across it. They reached the opposite bank of the strait near the Monastery of St. Tarasios, then headed undisturbed towards Serdica, where they joined forces with the local tribes and made contact with Pecheneg groups that had settled in other regions of the Balkans. Reunited and armed with axes, scythes, and other iron farming tools, they marched to Philippopolis, crossed the Balkan mountain range, and set up camp on the Osmos River, on the Danube plain. Selte and his men remained in Lobitzos (Lovech), but were forced to withdraw under pressure from troops led by Arianitzes, sent from the *thema* of Macedonia to deal with them.[10]

The Pechenegs eventually settled in an area that John Skylitzes called the 'Hundred Hills' ('Εκατον βυονοί).[11] The precise location of their new settlement is not known. Some researchers assume it was located near Preslav, the former

7 Schmitt (2006, 481 (note 76)) believes that the number provided by John Skylitzes is too high and suggests lowering it radically to 1600–2000 horsemen.

8 Io.Scyl., 460 (v. 87–97); Wortley 2010, 430.

9 Io.Scyl., 460–461 (v. 3–18); Wortley 2010, 430–431; Io.Zon., 643; Trapp 1986, 106–107.

10 Io.Scyl., 461 (v. 18–42); Wortley 2010, 431–432; Io.Zon., 644; Trapp 1986, 107.

11 Io.Scyl., 465 (v. 29–34); Wortley 2010, 434–435.

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capital of Bulgaria.[12] Others locate it somewhere in south Dobrudja or on the border between Dobrudja and north-east Bulgaria.[13] Nevertheless, sources confirm that the 'Hundred Hills' contained valleys, groves, thickets, streams, and pastures. The presence of the latter seems to suggest that this new location, chosen by the Pechenegs themselves, suited their traditional lifestyle much better. They soon began to raid neighbouring lands, with the aim of their expedition being the area between the Balkan mountain range, the lower Danube, and the Black Sea coast.

The above events came as a complete surprise to Byzantine elites. The foundation of the Empire's policy towards the Pechenegs was turned upside down. Writing a few decades later, Michael Attaleiates, referred to it as trying to 'paint the Ethiopian white'.[14] While we can agree with him that the policy was inherently flawed had no chance of success, we need to note that more than one party was at fault, though the Byzantine author saw the situation otherwise. In reality, the Pechenegs were not so much offered living conditions they chose to reject, as much as ones they could never have accepted. This attempt to suddenly make a farmer out of a steppe-dweller, an individual accustomed to a nomadic lifestyle and the activities associated with it, made as much sense as trying to 'paint the Ethiopian white'. Michael Attaleiates understood his metaphor differently, however, and we can assume that he was disappointed mostly with the attitude of the Pecheneg elites. Byzantine authors of the time must have regarded the behaviour of Pecheneg leaders – who had received lavish attention from the emperor in terms of both their material and spiritual needs – as ungrateful. Yet, Constantine IX Monomachos had made a number of serious mistakes in his relations with the nomads.

Although the rebellion of 1048 posed a serious threat, the emperor still had means at his disposal that could potentially pacify it. It is worth noting that a large majority of Pecheneg leaders, including Tyrach himself, were in the hands of the Byzantines. They could be used as hostages to prevent the rebels from acting too violently, since without their leaders, the nomads would be much less dangerous. Moreover, at the outset of the rebellion, Constantine IX could still count on the loyalty of Kegenes and his men. They represented a minority of the ethnic group as a whole, but in the event of a war with the Pechenegs, an alliance with them would be a valuable asset, especially in view of Kegenes' military talents.

12 Angold 1997, 38; Curta 2006, 297; Schmitt 2006, 482; Madgearu 2013a, 213; 2013, 126 (to the north and east of Preslav).

13 Bromberg 1938, 9; Diaconu 1970, 66–69; Soustal 1991, 96; Spinei 2003, 135; Dudek 2007, 118.

14 Mich.Att., 54/55.

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However, the emperor soon lost the support of Kegenes' men. When the nomad rebellion broke out, the Pecheneg leader had been summoned to Constantinople. He arrived with his troops and made camp near the capital, on a field called Maïtas. He never appeared before the monarch because he was attacked at night by three Pechenegs. The assassins managed only to cause him serious injuries and were quickly caught. When morning came, Baltzar, the older son of the injured leader, laid Kegenes down on a four-wheeled cart and entered the capital with the whole loyal troop. The three would-be murderers were chained to the carriage. Baltzar and Goulinos, the victim's second son, did not dare kill them because the assassins begged to be spared in the emperor's name. The result of their meeting with Constantine Monomachos led to a surprising result. When the monarch asked the assassins about their reasons for their attempt on Kegenes' life, they told him they did it because Kegenes had been critical of the emperor's rule and was going to enter the city at dawn to plunder it, murder its inhabitants, and join forces with the rebellious Pechenegs. The failed murderers turned out to be silver-tongued. Having believed their accusations, the emperor freed the assassins and imprisoned Kegenes and his sons.[15]

It is very probable the attackers were sent by the Pecheneg elites held in Constantinople, to whom Kegenes was a deadly threat. They most likely feared he would advise the emperor to put down the Pecheneg rebellion using means just as radical as those he proposed when the nomads had first arrived in the Balkans. And, in fact, murdering the elites would indeed have most probably made it easier to suppress the rebellion. Even if the Byzantines expressed moral reservations and refused to commit such brutal murder, Kegenes would still be very dangerous to Tyrach and the rest of the Pecheneg leaders. This was because he could either make use of the isolation of the elites to gain control over all Pechenegs or try to destroy them in cooperation with imperial troops.

The motives of the nomad elites are clear, but the behaviour of Constantine IX is more surprising, and must be considered a grave error. The emperor was clearly unnerved by what Kegenes' would-be murderers told him. He not only arrested Kegenes and his sons, but also attempted to neutralize their followers by ordering that their horses and weapons be taken from them and that they be imprisoned. However, the emperor's odd behaviour made the Pechenegs suspicious. They did not allow themselves be disarmed and withdrew from Constantinople under cover of darkness to cross the Balkan mountains and join the rest of the Pechenegs.[16] In this way, Constantine Monomachos

15 Io.Scyl., 465–466 (v. 36–63); Wortley 2010, 435.

16 Io.Scyl., 466 (v. 63–76); Wortley 2010, 435–436; Mich.Att., 54/55.

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strengthened the rebel forces and lost a valuable trump card that could have been used against them.

Meanwhile, the nomads, no longer threatened by Kegenes and his men, grew even bolder. They set up camp near Aulê, at the foot of the Balkans, not very far from Adrianople, and began carrying out plundering raids. Magistros Constantine Arianites, *doux* of the West, organized a military campaign against them. After defeating a few smaller Pecheneg units on his way to Dampolis (Yambol), he encountered the main body of their forces in the vicinity of the fortress. Arianites clearly underestimated his opponents. Even though his army was tired out from the long journey, he immediately engaged the nomads in battle and was defeated. Many soldiers from the *themata* of Thrace and Macedonia died in battle. Constantine Arianites himself sought shelter in Adrianople and from there sent word of the defeat to the emperor.[17]

Constantine IX appears to have been aware of the gravity of the situation, but he once again made a serious mistake. He attempted to placate the Pechenegs by releasing the elites being held in the capital, with Tyrach at their head, and lavishing them with gifts. In exchange, they promised to persuade their tribesmen to make peace. At the same time, however, perhaps due to doubts about the chances of this mission's success, he summoned the eastern *tagmata* (regiments) back to Europe and appointed rector Nikephoros as their commander. He also sent against the Pechenegs Katakalon Kekaumenos, *doux* of the East, and Hervé Frankopoulos, commander of the Latin mercenaries.[18] The duplicity of the emperor's actions was obvious. Given the situation, Tyrach and the other released Pecheneg leaders had no choice but to warn their tribesmen about the approaching Byzantine army.[19] In these circumstances, any attempt to encourage them to adopt a peaceful stance would be doomed to failure. Thus, if the Pecheneg elites had ever intended to keep their promise to the emperor, they were now forced to renege on it. In this way, the Byzantine emperor once again strengthened his opponents, this time on the eve of a major military confrontation.

Nikephoros, who was leading the main Byzantine army, crossed the Haemus through the Sidera Pass, reached Diakene, a village near the 'Hundred Hills', and set up camp, fortifying it with a strong palisade. The rector was very aggressive in his actions, as evidenced by his decision to move the theatre of war

17 Io.Scyl., 466–467 (v. 76–92); Wortley 2010, 436; Cat.Cec, 178/179 (v. 12–28). Genadii Litavrin identifies the battle described by Kekaumenos as the battle of Dampolis. For other hypotheses and discussion: Cat.Cec., note 256, 386–391.

18 Io.Scyl., 467 (v. 93–108 (8)); Wortley 2010, 436–437.

19 Io.Scyl., 468 (v. 19–22); Wortley 2010, 437.

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out beyond the Balkan mountains, to the area neighbouring the enemy's home base. Nikephoros was convinced he would achieve victory and went so far as to bring ropes and leather bands to tie up Pecheneg captives. Against the advice of Katakalon Kekaumenos, he put off engaging in battle because he believed that carrying out an attack prematurely, before the main forces of the enemy had gathered, would make it impossible to destroy the Pechenegs once and for all. Yet, when it finally came time to do battle, it was the Byzantines who suffered a crushing defeat. Rector Nikephoros and Frankopoulos fled the battlefield with most of their army. Kekaumenos and his small force resisted, but during fighting the commander was severely injured and taken captive.[20] The Pechenegs did not pursue the fleeing forces; however, they acquired a handsome booty, because most of the goods from the Byzantine camp fell into their hands.[21]

After the two battles lost by the Byzantines in 1049, relations between the Pechenegs and the Empire were very much like they were before their mass migration. The only major difference was that the Pechenegs had previously lived outside the Empire's borders and Constantinople had an ally among them, namely Kegenes and his followers. Due to the grave errors committed by Constantine Monomachos, the divisions that once stood in the way of Pecheneg unity had now ceased to exist, and the nomads' social elites had been reassumed their former position. Encouraged by their previous successes, the Pechenegs began raiding the Byzantine provinces south of the Balkan mountains. This led the emperor to mobilize another army, led by the heteriarch Constantine. In the spring of 1050, he gathered his forces – comprised of soldiers from both the western and eastern *tagmata* – in the area near Adrianople, where he established a camp surrounded by strong fortifications. The Pechenegs arrived in the area on 8 June, having crossed the mountain range.[22] The previous actions of Constantine seem to confirm that he treated the Pechenegs as an enemy that undoubtedly needed to be countered. However, not all his subordinates agreed with him on this subject. While senior military officers were holding a meeting in the heteriarch's tent, Samuel Bourtzes, a patrician and commander of the infantry, left the fortifications with his troops and attacked the Pechenegs without waiting for the commander's signal. As a result, the entire army was drawn into a battle with the Pechenegs, as the remaining troops, though not fully readied, joined the fight to support the infantry. The Byzantines were ultimately defeated, but they did not suffer

20 For more information on the life of Kekaumenos, see Chapter 4.4 of the present book.

21 Io.Scyl., 467–469 (v. 8–19, 22–50); Wortley 2010, 437–438; Mich.Att., 56/57–58/59.

22 Io.Scyl., 469–470 (v. 60–73); Wortley 2010, 438.

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great losses and withdrew back to their fortifications. However, several high ranking commanders, including patrician Michael Dokeianos and *magistros* Constantine Arianites, were killed. The Pechenegs, whose morale was lifted significantly, immediately attacked the fortifications. They successfully filled the outer trench with branches and stones, but the sudden death of Soultzous, one of their leaders, who was struck, along with his horse, by an arrow fired from a catapult, curbed their enthusiasm. Moreover, relief arrived from Adrianople in the form of 'the regiment of the Scholai' led by *protospatharios* Niketas Glabas. The Pechenegs soon withdrew when they heard that Bulgarian troops led by *syncellus* Basil were en route.[23] The Byzantine army was thus saved from a total rout.

However, Macedonia and Thrace were no longer safe, and the Pechenegs continued to raid them with impunity. Their boldest raids brought them to the foreground of the capital. One of their units even reached as far as the area of Katasyrtai.[24] Constantine Monomachos was therefore more pressed to act than ever before. He once again opted to play a tried-and-true trump card. He freed Kegenes, most probably hoping that he would manage to bring at least some nomads back on board, thereby weakening the threat they posed.[25] In light of the Pechenegs' conflict with Constantinople and the fact that Tyrach and his supporters had regained control over all Pechenegs, this mission seems to have been a lost cause. It is hard to say what Kegenes himself expected. Perhaps as a true inhabitant of the steppe, he simply believed in his own charisma. He had survived a number of assassination attempts ordered by Tyrach, including the last treacherous incident just outside the walls of Constantinople. It also cannot be ruled out that in 1050 he had received the title of *magistros* and *archon* of Patzinacia.[26] Preserved copies of seals with these titles come from this period. Kegenes would thus have been granted the right from the Byzantines to act as the sole leader of the Pechenegs. The 'only' thing he required to accomplish this goal was the approval of his tribesmen; however, instead they treated him like a dangerous renegade. In 1050 or 1051, Kegenes made contact with a group of his fellow tribesmen who promised to do whatever he requested.

23 Io.Scyl., 470–471 (v. 73–107 (7)); Wortley 2010, 438–439; Mich.Att., 58/59–60/61.

24 Io.Scyl., 471–472 (v. 23–27); Wortley 2010, 439–440.

25 Io.Scyl., 471 (v. 14–17); Wortley 2010, 439.

26 Cf. Madgearu 2003, 51; 2013a, 211; 2013, 123. Madgearu points out that the title of *magistros*, which appears in Kegen's seals, was of higher rank than that of patrician. It can therefore be assumed that he was granted additional powers, greater than those he enjoyed immediately after entering imperial service.

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Believing their assurances, he went to meet them, but when he arrived, the Pechenegs murdered him and cut him up into pieces.[27]

The treachery and ignominious death of Kegenes were largely a consequence of the emperor's mistakes. However, luckily for himself, Constantine IX did not base his plans solely on the mission he had entrusted to the *magistros* and *archon* of Patzinacia. The emperor formed new armies, but this time, bearing in mind his previous experiences, he decided to change his strategy and tactics. The aim now was not to annihilate the enemy, but to limit raids on the provinces south of the Balkan Mountains. Imperial commanders were ordered to avoid battles with the enemy's main forces and instructed to attack smaller units that had arrived in Macedonia and Thrace to plunder these lands.[28] Changes were also clearly visible in the means of fighting employed by the forces assembled by Monomachos. These which were meant to resemble those of the nomads, and to this end, he had brought 20,000 mounted archers from the east. Apart from this, he mobilized reinforcements comprised of Franks and Varangians. The patrician and ethnarch Bryennios was appointed commander of these forces. He brought his army to Adrianople, where his actions were limited to defending nearby villages against Pecheneg raids. Another patrician, Michael Akolouthos, was sent with orders similar to those given to Bryennios. Close cooperation between the two commanders resulted in two victories over the Pechenegs, one in Goloe and the other in Toplitzos, a fortress on the Euros River. In Kharioupolis, these commanders completely surprised a group of nomads who were looting the *thema* of Macedonia. Pecheneg raids did not stop after these military successes, but for the next two years they were less much bold.[29]

In 1053, most likely encouraged by his recent successes, Constantine IX decided to try to defeat his enemy once and for all. In order to accomplish this, he mobilized a great army comprised of the forces from both the east and west. Michael Akolouthos was appointed its commander. He entrusted Basil the syncellus with the task of commanding the Bulgarian troops. The two commanders then set out to confront the Pechenegs, who had chosen to seek shelter in the Great Preslav once they learned of the planned military expedition. They built a palisade around their camp, forcing the Byzantine army to lay siege, which proved ineffective. The imperial forces were now far from a secure

27 Io.Scyl., 472 (v. 35–37); Wortley 2010, 440.

28 Io.Scyl., 471 (v. 17–23); Wortley 2010, 440; Mich.Att., 60/61–62/63. For more on the changes in the Byzantines' tactics after the defeats suffered in the years 1049–1050: Stephenson 2000, 92.

29 Io.Scyl., 472–473 (v. 38–63); Wortley 2010, 440–441; Mich.Att., 60/61–62/63, 64/65.

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supply base, and soon began to suffer from a scarcity of provisions. These circumstances led the Byzantine leaders to jointly agree on the need to withdraw under cover of darkness. The Romans' plans did not go unnoticed, however, and this time Tyrach proved himself to be an extremely capable commander. He gathered a sizeable force to pursue the retreating Byzantines and blocked the routes across the mountain range. The retreat turned into a chaotic route. Many Romans were killed or taken captive, and Basil the syncellus was killed as well.[30]

Constantine Monomachos intended to organize another expedition, but when the Pechenegs came to him seeking peace, he entered into a thirty-year peace agreement with them.[31] The provisions set forth in the agreement are not known. We can only assume that it legitimized the status quo, for which the nomads had fought hard. Ultimately, it was the Pechenegs who determined the place and conditions of their settling within the Empire, thereby shattering the unrealistic hopes harboured in Constantinople. The conditions forced upon the Pechenegs in 1047 as terms for living within the empire had made their rebellion inevitable. However, it would have been possible to pacify them at an early stage of their uprising if not for grave mistakes made by Constantine IX Monomachos. It could even be said that the manner in which he treated Kegenes and his followers made the emperor responsible for restoring unity among the Pechenegs. It is difficult to determine what were the reasons behind the poor judgement of the *basileus*. We can only speculate that his indecision was a consequence of rivalry between politicians or political parties that suggested either employing drastic measures against the nomads or opposed this idea and opted for more conciliatory solutions, ones that were more diplomatic than military. The incompetence of the Byzantine army is equally startling. The defeats of 1049 and 1050 can be explained by the fact that they underestimating their opponents, but the failure of the last expedition of 1053 comes as a real surprise; all the more so since the enemy did not try to disperse, which the nomads normally did, but instead decided to defend a fortified camp that the imperial forces failed to take. The war against the Pechenegs therefore revealed a crisis in the Byzantine army, one that would be further neglected by subsequent emperors.[32]

The humiliated empire had to accept the presence of the Pechenegs in the Balkans. For the next 40 years, the ethnos enjoyed almost total independence.

30 Io.Scyl., 475–476 (v. 17–37); Wortley 2010, 443; Mich.Att., 64/65–68/69; Cat.Cec., 180/1–182/3 (v. 19–30, 1–6).

31 Io.Scyl., 476 (v. 37–43); Wortley 2010, 443; Mich.Att., 74/75–76/77.

32 Treadgold 1995, 39f.

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Some researchers point to similarities between the Pechenegs and the nomadic Bulgars of Turkic descent. Almost four centuries earlier, they invaded the Empire's territory and created an independent political entity whose centre may have been located in the same area where the Pechenegs later likewise chose to settle.[33] The analogies here are indeed striking, but it is worth noting there were significant differences as well. First, it would seem that the position of the Dulo clan, from which Asparukh and his successors descended, was much stronger than the that of Tyrach's clan or that of any other Pecheneg noble. In addition, the Bulgars already had a monarchical tradition dating back to the times of Kubrat's Great Bulgaria.[34] Asparukh rose to become an absolute ruler mostly as a result of his successes on the battlefield in the fight against Byzantium. The position of Tyrach was never as strong. We see him as a leader mostly at times when the Pechenegs as a group were threatened. Yet he was always surrounded by a number of other tribal chiefs, indicating his power was limited. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Pechenegs, unlike the Bulgars, did not create a strongly hierarchical political structure, but comprised a relatively loose, segmented political organism. Nothing indicates that this changed when they settled in the Byzantine Empire. Even when some Pecheneg leader rose to such eminence that his existence was noted by Byzantine sources, no member of this tribe is ever credited with attaining the status of a ruler. It is worth noting one additional point. After the Bulgars arrived in the Balkans and defeated the army of Constantine IV, they immediately began organizing their state. Around its centre were located vassal Slavic tribes, which most likely serve as a sort of buffer.[35] This type of social engineering, scrupulously recorded in Byzantine sources, clearly indicates that the Bulgars indeed became masters of the lands located north of the Balkan Mountains. Nothing like this ever occurred in the case of the Pechenegs. We definitely cannot say they ruled over the *thema* of Paristrion. Until the 1070s, the Byzantine Empire controlled the urban centres on the lower Danube and the west cost of the Black Sea. The indigenous population, which had to choose between the Byzantine administration and the menacing nomads, who had earlier proven how aggressive they could be, usually opted for the Empire. This choice was also facilitated by certain steps taken by Byzantium, such as granting regular subsidies and maintaining trade relations with native groups, as a means of strengthening their loyalty.[36]

33 Stephenson 1999, 45; Bonarek 2011, 93–94.

34 Cf. Chapter 2 of the present book.

35 Nic.Patr., 36, 23–26 (p. 90/91); Th.Conf., 359 (v. 12–17); Mango, Scott 1997, 499. Cf. Beshevliev 1981, 179–181; 1984, 60–61; Halperin 2007, 86; Ziemann 2007, 167–179; Paroń 2013, 238.

36 Cf. Stephenson 1999, 56; 2000, 93–96.

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The Pechenegs therefore did not have traditions that would allow them to follow the path chosen by the Danube Bulgars, which led towards the creation of a strong monarchical system. It indeed seems that throughout their presence in the Balkans, they never showed any ambitions of this sort. They were a difficult and unpredictable partner, but they were sufficiently powerful that efforts to annihilate them proved to be extremely difficult. At the same time, they never posed an existential threat to Byzantium, even if they were able to effectively undermine its security and efforts to maintain order in the Balkan provinces.

Byzantium was unable to rid itself of the Pechenegs, but nor could it ignore them. The Byzantine administration therefore undertook measures to appease the Pechenegs in the form of subsidies intended to curb their aggression.[37] They were also occasionally mobilized by the Empire and took part in a number of military campaigns. It cannot be ruled out that some members of the Danube fortress guard were also recruited from the Pechenegs.[38] It is difficult to say whether the Byzantines undertook missionary activity among the Pechenegs or merely settled for their formally adopting Christianity. It is confirmation, however, of an archbishopric in Dristra with five subordinate suffragan dioceses, indicating that conditions for missionary work among the Pechenegs were favourable.[39]

Thus, despite all the failures suffered in the years 1048–1053, Byzantium possessed an array of tools which could over time turn the nomads into loyal subjects. Financial benefits, long-term military service, and conversion to a new faith all clearly opened up a path for the Pechenegs' acculturation. However, this would take time; and time was something the empire, which found itself in an ever-deepening crisis, no longer had.

7.1.2 *Feigned Loyalty* (*1053–1072*)

Six years of relative peace with the Pechenegs suggested that most of the group's leaders accepted the agreement made with Constantine IX Monomachos, but in 1059, during the reign of Isaac Komnenos, the former steppe-dwellers rebelled once again.[40] Their moment of opportunity coincided with a conflict

37 Mich.Att., 76/77. Cf. Stephenson 1999, 46–47, 49.

38 Madgearu 1999, 442. This is ostensibly evidenced by a quiver and elements of a bow discovered in cities on the lower Danube (Garvăn and Nufăru). See also Madgearu 2013, 124–125.

39 Stephenson 1999, 56–57; 2000, 97.

40 For more about the events between 1053 and 1072: Vasil'evskii 1908, 25–33; Zlatarski 1972, 110–119; Diaconu 1970, 76–81; Fine 1983, 210–211; Malamut 1995, 128–129; Stephenson

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that broke out between the Byzantine Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary,[41] the reasons for which are unknown. The chronological proximity between the conflict and the Pechenegs' rebellion suggests that opponents of the Byzantine Empire might have been involved.[42] The rebellion did not lead to any significant battles; Isaac Komnenos promptly headed north with his troops. After reaching Sofia, he met with the Hungarian diplomats who came to negotiate the restoration of peace. The Empire's only opponents were the Pechenegs, but they soon lost interest in fighting. Most of their leaders submitted to the emperor's authority; only one of them, Selte, chose to continue fighting against the Empire. However, his decision led to failure, as his seat, located in an inaccessible site somewhere on the Lower Danube, was seized and destroyed.[43]

Although startling, these events can be seen as logical and predictable. The Pechenegs must have realized a fight against the Empire without the help of the Hungarians had no chance of success, especially in the view of Isaac Komnenos' quick intervention. Selte's reaction exposes the ethnos' weak leadership. Michael Psellos, whose accounts differ slightly from the data provided by other 11th-century authors, argues that the emperor sought to drive the nomads out beyond the Empire's borders.[44] While it is difficult to determine whether this is true or not, the willingness with which Isaac Komnenos accepted the oath of allegiance made by the Pechenegs casts doubt on the veracity of Psellos' account. Returning to the events of the summer of 1059, it should be noted that the nomads were quite eager to cooperate with an enemy of the Empire. The fact that their declaration of loyalty to the emperor had been made under the threat of military action best illustrates the value and strength of this oath.

2000, 93–98; Spinei 2003, 137; 2009, 112–118; Curta 2006, 298–299; Bonarek 2011, 87–94; Madgearu 2013, 127–131.

41 Mich.Att., 120/121; Scyl.Cont., 106.

42 Vasil'evskii 1908, 25; Moravcsik 1970, 62–63; Shepard 1999, 69; Curta 2006, 298; Spinei 2009, 112; Madgearu 2013, 95, 127–129. Madgearu argues that the Hungarian invasion was a response to Byzantine provocations organized with the help of the Pechenegs. Taking other sources into consideration, this interpretation seems wrong. Madgearu, relying on the misinterpreted accounts of Michael Psellos, assumes that another migration of Pechenegs from across the Danube took place in 1059.

43 Mich.Att., 120/121–122/123 (Attaleiates argues that the authority over Selte's seat was transferred to the Byzantine *strategos*); Scyl.Cont., 106–107; Io.Zon., 671; Trapp 1986, 125. For a discussion on the location of Selte's seat: Madgearu 2013, 129.

44 Mich.Psell., VII 70 (p. 242); Sewter 1953, 243. This information is confirmed by Matthew of Edessa, who argues that Isaac Komnenos allegedly crossed the Danube during his campaign against the Pechenegs. Dostourian 1993, 90.

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Despite this, the following five years saw relative peace in the Balkans. This ended in 1064, when the Pechenegs began their invasions once again.[45] These are mentioned in historical sources, which suggests they were significant in scale, but there is no information about who led them or the regions invaded.[46] Byzantine border defence forces fought with a fair degree of effectiveness, and managed to ward off the enemy repeatedly. Despite this, the Pechenegs were not defeated, while their raids were ultimately suspended as the result of peace agreements.

These conflicts were merely a prelude to the chaos that enveloped the Balkans in the autumn of 1064[47] as a result of a major migration by the Uzes. The course of these events bore a resemblance to the mass migration of Tyrach's Pechenegs twenty years earlier, when an entire ethnos similarly forced its way onto the Empire's territory.[48] After easily defeating the Byzantine forces guarding the border and imprisoning their commanders, Basil Apokapes and Nikephoros Botaneiates the Uzes could freely plunder the western provinces of the Balkans, including Illyria and the areas around Thessaloniki. Some Uze forces reached as far as the *thema* of Hellas. The strength and numbers of the Uzes completely paralyzed the Byzantine administration. Emperor Constantine X Dukas did not believe it was possible to militarily defeat the Uzes, so he resorted to diplomacy. When this failed as well, he decided to flee the capital and escape the growing dissatisfaction of his subjects, taking refuge in Choirobakchoi, escorted by an entourage of 150 people.[49]

This seemingly hopeless situation had an unexpected positive ending for the Empire: just as suddenly as the Uzes had appeared in the Balkans, they now began to retreat. The reason for this withdrawal may have been illnesses that decimated the Uzes, like the Pechenegs years earlier. Michael Attaleiates, who described these events in the greatest detail, also mentions the nomads suffered from famine, despite having plundered the Balkan provinces. It should be noted that most of the Uzes' military activity was concentrated in the

45 Mich.Att., 150/51.

46 It is possible that it was the Pechenegs, not the Uzes, who conquered and destroyed Pliska. Michael Attaleiates' account suggests that Uzes fought mainly in the west Balkans (see below). The Byzantine author also states that in 1064 fighting with the Pechenegs occurred in close vicinity to their lands, matching the location of Pliska. For a traditional approach: Madgearu 2013, 89, 130.

47 Alexandru Madgearu dates the Uzes' invasion to 1065, relying on the accounts of Matthew of Edessa. He does not explain, however, why he considers the frequently inaccurate chronology of this source as more important than Byzantine sources. Madgearu 2013, 69 (note 55), 89, 130.

48 Mich.Att., 150/51–152/53; Scyl.Cont., 113–114; Io.Zon., 678; Trapp 1986, 129.

49 Mich.Att., 152/53–154/155.

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Empire's western Balkan provinces. It is thus possible that the Uzes, used to life on the steppe, found this mostly mountainous terrain an unsuitable area for inhabitation.[50] Those Uzes who did not make it as far as the north bank of the Danube were attacked by the Pechenegs and Bulgarians. The survivors of these attacks returned to Byzantine lands, where they were relocated to Macedonia with the expectation that the Empire would hire them as mercenaries in future military actions.[51]

The Pechenegs' response to the Uze invasion generally served the interests of the Empire. They destroyed a significant number of the aggressor's forces and were most likely one of the reasons why the Uzes decided to retreat across the Danube. Despite this fact, their actions should not be seen as a result of the influence of Byzantine diplomacy. The Pechenegs fought in their own interest, annihilating their long-time enemies, whose presence in the Balkans must have seemed particularly dangerous for them.[52] Also, having the Uzes within the sphere of interest of Byzantine diplomacy could not have been welcomed by the nomads, as there was a risk that Constantinople would use them against the Pechenegs.

50 A. Madgearu (2013, 130), referring to archeological finds, assumes that the Uzes were active only in the *thema* of Paradunavon. During their invasion, they were said to have destroyed Garvăn, Oltina (both situated on the Danube) and Pliska, which, if possible, seem to be the first part of the raid, concluded by the defeat of the Byzantine army and the capturing of its leaders. Later on, the nomads headed west, probably in search of booty.

51 Mich.Att., 154/5–156/7, 158/9; Scyl.Cont., 115; Io.Zon., 679; Trapp 1986, 130.

52 Madgearu (2013, 129) argues that "the finest Pechenegs" took part in the Uzes' invasion. He based this hypothesis on Michael Glykas' chronicles, mainly on the following passage: […] κατὰ δέ γε τὴν δύσιν ἔθνος Οὐζικὸν (Σκύθαι δὲ οὗτοι) καὶ τῶν Πατζιναικῶν οἱ εὐγενέστεροι τὸν Ἴστρον διαπεραιώσαντες […]. Mich.Glyc., 605 (v. 24–26). Theoretically, Madgearu's interpretation based on this passage is possible, although Glycas does not mention "the finest" Pechenegs but "nobler" ones. Therefore, the passage should be understood as: when the Byzantine Empire was struggling with the Turks on the east, "the Uzes" and "nobler Pechenegs crossed the Danube". The more accurate interpretation of Glycas' text identifies the comparative form "εὐγενέστεροι" to be describing the word Σκύθαι. In this case, the above-mentioned passage should be understood in a different way: in the west, the Uzes, some Scythians nobler than the Pechenegs, crossed the Ister. The information provided by Glycas should be compared with the earlier accounts of the continuator of John Skylitzes' chronicle, who characterized the Uzes in the following way: τὸ τῶν Οὔζων ἔθνος (γένος δὲ οὗτοι Σκυθικὸν καὶ τῶν Πατζινάκων εὐγενέστερόν τε καὶ πολυπληθέστερον). Scyl.Cont., 114 (v. 1–3). In the case of the second interpretation, the author wanted to emphasize the supremacy of the Uzes. Although they were Scythians, like the Pechenegs, they were nobler and more numerous. Therefore, there is no evidence of cooperation between the Pechenegs and the Uzes during the invasion of the Empire in 1064.

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After the Uzes' retreat, the Pechenegs no longer had any interest in remaining loyal to Byzantium. They attacked the Balkans again around 1066. According to the historical sources, their invasions were aimed solely at looting. It is hard to determine how far they reached into the Balkans. Romanos Diogenes, at that time a *strategos* stationed in Serdica, managed to stop them relatively quickly, defeating a large force of Pechenegs troops. As proof of his victory, he sent captives and the severed heads of the nomads killed back to Constantinople. As a reward, he was bestowed the title of *vestarches*[53] by Emperor Constantine X Dukas.

The successes of Diogenes who would soon be crowned Emperor (1068), presaged the changes soon to come in relations between the Empire and its restive subjects. During the reign of the new *basileus*, the Empire cooperated militarily with the Pechenegs a number of times. They most certainly fought together against the Seljuks, and in 1068, they joined Diogenes during his campaign in Syria. They were also sent to requisition supplies in the vicinity of Aleppo and performed this task well, thoroughly plundering the enemy's land. They are said to have brought to the Roman camp numerous captives of both sexes and herds of cattle.[54] One year later, mercenaries described as 'Scythians' again appeared with Romanos Diogenes in the east. Michael Attaleiates mentions them in his accounts of battles fought at Kaisareia in Kappadokia, where they were part of the advance guard of the Empire's army.[55]

'Scythians' also took part in the campaign of 1071, which ended with the battle of Manzikert. They were also responsible for foraging for supplies, such as when they were sent toward the fortress of Chliat.[56] Their role before and during the battle of Manzikert is unknown. Michael Attaleiates mentions the desertion of one 'Scythian' unit led by Tamis, but this took place before the battle.[57] This desertion induced the Byzantine Empire to ensure the remaining 'Scythians" loyalty by introducing a special oath. Michael Attaleiates himself was responsible for performing this ceremony and, according to his account, it was sufficiently effective to keep all the 'Scythian' mercenaries on the battlefield.[58] The fact that Attaleiates took part in these events would seem to give his account credibility, but we also need to remember that he was judging his own actions. Matthew of Edessa, a 12th-century Armenian chronicler,

53 Scyl.Cont., 121; Io.Zon., 684; Trapp 1986, 132–3. Cf. Madgearu 2013, 76.
54 Mich.Att., 188/9, 198/9; Scyl.Cont., 128.
55 Mich.Att., 230/231.
56 Mich.Att., 270/1, 272/3.
57 Mich.Att., 286/7.
58 Mich.Att., 288/9.

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reported that Pecheneg and Uze troops on the right flank of Romanos Diogenes' army joined the sultan's forces during the battle.[59] Although the information provided by this Armenian author is frequently distorted or untrue, in this case, his accounts can be trusted, considering his close geographical proximity to the events described. The nomads' betrayal was not as glaring as Matthew's brief account suggests. It may have resulted from the course of the battle; despite some early successes, the tide began to turn against the Imperial army. The desertion of the 'Scythian' mercenaries probably took place during this reversal of fortunes, as the Empire began to lose the battle. It is hard to accurately assess these actions, considering the dubious behaviour of some of the Byzantine commanders.[60]

In 1071, the Pechenegs took part in yet another military campaign on the Empire's north-west border. According to Hungarian chronicles, the Pechenegs moved onto the lands of the Arpad dynasty, where the forces of Belgrade made no effort at resistance. After crossing the Sava River, the Pechenegs devastated parts of the Kingdom of Hungary and then retreated with considerable booty and numerous captives.[61] It is difficult to assess the role of the duke of Belgrade in provoking this invasion, but, Solomon, the King of Hungary, interpreted his actions as an act of aggression and organized a punitive expedition. The Byzantine fleet failed to stop the Hungarians on the Sava River, allowing Solomon and his army to reach Belgrade. The garrison defending the city called on the Pechenegs for assistance, but their forces were annihilated by the Hungarians. The few survivors fled the battlefield, including the Pecheneg leader Kazar. The Pechenegs' defeat sealed the fate of Belgrade's defenders, who surrendered after a three-month siege.[62]

The Byzantine provocation, if the Belgrade garrison had indeed played a role in it, grew into a serious border incident, adding to the state of chaos that had gripped the Empire since 1071. The Arpads took advantage of the Empire's growing troubles by attacking and conquering Niš.[63] The tense situation in

59 Dostourian (1993), 135. The Armenian chronicler's information on the presence of the Pechenegs and the Uzes during the battle of Manzikert was confirmed by Ibn al-Athir: Richards 2002, 170. Cf. Bonarek 2011, 173.

60 On the second day of the battle, before its conclusion, Andronikos Dukas heard and began to spread rumours of Romanos Diogenes' death. Mich.Att., 292/293; Scyl.Cont., 148–149; Io.Zon., 701; Trapp 1986, 143. Cf. Angold 2008, 608; Korobeinikov 2008, 703; Bonarek 2011, 171 (note 854).

61 Chr.Hung., 369–370.

62 Chr.Hung., 370–374.

63 Chr.Hung., 377–378; Nic.Bryenn., III 1 (p. 208/9–210/1). For more about Byzantine-Hungarian relations between 1071 and 1075: Moravcsik 1970, 64–65; Shepard 1999, 71–79; Stephenson 2000, 141; Bonarek 2011, 104–105; Madgearu 2013, 96–98 (Madgearu assumes that as a

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the Balkans was further complicated by an uprising among the Slavs, led by Constantine Bodin, the son of Michael of Dioclea,[64] though this rebellion was quickly crushed. The overthrow of Romanos Diogenes and crowning of Michael VII Dukas as emperor did not solve the country's problems. To the contrary, it provided the sultan with a pretext to continue his expansion in Asia Minor.[65] The weakness of Byzantium also had an influence on its relations with the Pechenegs, whose became more brash in their actions. Shows of force, like the one carried out by Isaac Komnenos, and the later victories of the Byzantine emperors helped to keep the nomads in line and discouraged them from invading and plundering the Balkan provinces. An additional and probably equally important means of eliminating resistance were regular or occasional subsidies paid by the Byzantine administration as a kind of tribute to buy peace. A failure to make these payments carried the risk of sparking a rebellion.

The level of Pechenegs' loyalty between 1053 and 1071 was therefore relatively low. Their cooperation with the Byzantine army, mentioned in various historical sources, resulted from converging interests rather than loyalty to the Empire. The Pechenegs agreed to join the Empire in its military campaigns as long as they could benefit from them. However, another source of booty was their alliances with Constantinople's enemies and invasions of neighboring Byzantine provinces. Nothing suggests they had any ethical qualms that would have limited such actions.

Remaining within the borders of the Byzantine Empire should have led to the gradual acculturation of the Pechenegs. Such a process undoubtedly occurred. Although almost entirely independent, the former steppe-dwellers had to adjust to their new environment. These changes are especially visible in their funeral ceremonies. The ritual of burying warriors with their horses in prehistoric kurgans, typical of the Pechenegs from the Black Sea-Caspian steppe, disappeared in the Balkans. The influence of this ritual can still be seen in some graves, which contain elements of horse tack or even horse bones.[66]

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result of the events of the early 1070s the Empire maintained authority over Belgrade but lost Sirmium to the Arpads).

64 Eventually, he took the name of Peter, after the 10th-century Bulgarian ruler and Peter Delian, the leader of the Slav rebellion of the 1040s. Cf. Stephenson 2000, 141–143; Madgearu 2013, 96.

65 Ostrogorski 1967, 283; Treadgold 1997, 604–607; Korobeinikov 2008, 702ff.; Bonarek 2011, 190–195.

66 Fiedler 2013, 260–267. After studying the available materials from the graves, the researcher notes that there are only six sites south of the Danube with inventories characteristic of steppe-dwellers, probably the Pechenegs.

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However, too few archeological finds of this sort have been made to allow for a more exact dating of such items or determination of their ethnic origin. Perhaps further research and the excavation of additional archeological material will help explain the nature of this sudden cultural change. The circumstances may have been prosaic, such as the decidedly poorer environmental conditions in the Balkans for the development of extensive herding, which in turn decreased the size of the nomads' herds of horses. Thus, as more valuable animals, horses were less frequently sacrificed during funeral ceremonies.[67]

A burial site discovered in Odărci (north-east Bulgaria) comprising 536 graves[68] ostensibly provides evidence of rapid cultural change in the Pechenegs' social practices. Liudmila Doncheva-Petkova has dated this site to 1053. As evidenced from the crosses and encolpions found in these graves, the decline of steppe funeral ceremonies may also have been associated with Christianization. However, the assignment of this burial site to the Pechenegs has been called into doubt, particularly by Florin Curta.[69] One of the main arguments supporting the hypothesis of its Pecheneg origins is the presence of elements of horse tack typical of steppe burial sites. However, in the Odărci burial site, the same elements were used for a different purpose: as clothing adornments. This raises the question of whether these ornaments were a means for the Pechenegs to demonstrate their identity in their new environment, as Doncheva-Petkova argues, or an adaptation of steppe traditions by a local, non-nomadic community, as suggested by Curta.

In an effort to combine both interpretations, one can argue that during the latter half of the 11th century, new communities came into being in the Balkans. They may have been comprised of a combination of nomadic, not necessarily Pecheneg, peoples and indigenous inhabitants. In his description of the revolt of the *vestarches* Nestor, Michael Attaleiates mentions the inhabitants of cities on the Lower Danube, calling them *mixobarbaroi*.[70] It can be concluded from his account that their 'semi-barbarity' derived from linguistic diversity accompanied by – as I see it – cultural diversity. Most of these inhabitants were Christians, though loosely tied culturally to the Byzantine Empire. This Tower of Babel was also significantly influenced by nomadic communities. Attaleiates himself mentions that 'Scythians' imposed their traditions on, or simply them brought to, the Danube cities. This process is visible also in archeological finds which confirm that these cities were inhabited by people

67 Cf. general remarks: Lindner 1981, 3–19.
68 Doncheva-Petkova 2005; 2007, 643–660.
69 Curta 2013, 170–178, 180–181. See also: Fiedler 2013, 270–271.
70 Mich.Att. 372/3–374/5. Cf. Bonarek 2007, 193–200.

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with nomadic roots.[71] On the other hand, the process may also have been reversed, meaning that nomads who had chosen to create settled communities may have adopted elements of the *mixobarbaroi*'s culture.

Attaleiates clearly differentiates between 'semi-barbarians' and Pechenegs. The majority of the latter, residing in the Byzantine *thema* of Paristrion, probably had fewer contacts with the inhabitants of the cities of the lower Danube or cities along the Black Sea coast. Thus limited contact with foreign cultural patterns imposed upon their cultural universe to a much more limited degree.

The progressive Christianization of the Pechenegs is another matter worth considering. The available data, including that from both written and archeological sources, is too scarce to allow for a detailed examination. The finds from the Odărci burial site indicate that Christian funeral ceremonies were widespread. However, it has not been confirmed whether this site should be associated with the Pechenegs. Written sources provide almost no information about missions aimed at Christianizing these nomads. Outside of formulaic rhetorical praises,[72] whose grounding in reality is uncertain, there are no clear indicators related to this topic. This is quite surprising, as it was the Christianization of the Pechenegs that made possible their 'Byzantinization'.

This cultural change, which most likely occurred around 1053, modestly strengthened the nomads' political loyalty to the Byzantine Empire. The events that accompanied this phenomenon presaged closer relations between the Pechenegs and some of the local communities described as *mixobarbaroi*, and perhaps even their integration.

7.1.3 *The Pechenegs and the Empire During the Crisis of the 1070s*

The year 1071, a dismal one for the Byzantine Empire, began a decade of crisis during which the Empire practically lost control over it lands north of the Balkans.[73] Although there were still several enclaves controlled by Constantinople in the *thema* of Paristrion, especially in the north part of Dobrudja,[74] the major part of the province had become independent of the

71 Cf. note 1583.

72 An.Kom., VI 13.4 (p. 199); Sewter 2009, 182; La vie, 230. Both Anna Komnena and the author of *The Life of St. Cyril* praise emperor Alexios Komnenos. Cf. Stephenson 1999, 56–57; Ivanov 2003, 224–247; 2008, 328–329. Ivanov suggests that the author's praises of the life of St. Cyril may be associated with the period after 1091, when the Pechenegs were subordinate to the Empire.

73 For general information on the events of the 1070s: Vasil'evskii 1908, 33–44; Zlatarski 1934, 154–166; Diaconu 1970, 100–111; Malamut 1995, 129–134; Stephenson 2000, 98–100; Spinei 2003, 137–140; Curta 2006, 299–300; Madgearu 2013, 131–132.

74 It is generally considered that north Dobrudja, especially the region of Isaccea, was loyal to the Empire. Confirmation of this loyalty is the functioning of a local mint. Madgearu 1999, 428; 2013, 82–83 (note 129); Curta 2006, 299.

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Empire.[75] The reason for this was not only the Empire's military weakness, but also changes in Byzantine policy towards Paristrion's inhabitants, forced upon the Empire by a budgetary crisis. The eunuch Nikephoros, also nicknamed Nikephoritzes, the *de facto* ruler of the Empire at that time, ceased paying out subsidies to the Danube cities. As a result, some of them rebelled and allied themselves with the Pechenegs.[76] Advisors to Emperor Michael VII sent Nestor, the *katepano* of the *thema* of Paradunavon, to the areas where the rebellion had broken out. He was considered to be loyal to the emperor because he had also served his father, Constantine X. Before heading north, he was awarded the title of *vestarches*.[77]

Nestor's mission, which began in 1074, was diplomatic in character, rather than military. He traveled to the Danube cities along with several citizens of Dristra, whose role was to help him regain the loyalty of the city and the entire region. Once they arrived, Nestor quickly learned his task would not be easy. The city's inhabitants did not want to reinstate Constantinople's rule over them, and had instead entrusted authority over the Dristra fortress to a chief by the name of Tatus.[78] His background is unclear; John Zonaras is the only Byzantine author who acknowledges him as a Pecheneg.[79] Earlier sources provide no information about Tatus' ethnic origin, which suggests that the 12th-century chronicler determined it on the basis of his own speculations. The relation between the fortress's commander and the nomads, although well-established, does not constitute conclusive evidence of his Pecheneg origin. Tatus may have been a nomad or a descendant of nomads who decided to

75 Stephenson 1999, 58–60; 2000, 98–100.

76 Mich.Att., 372/3–374/5.

77 Mich.Att., 374/5; Scyl.Cont., 166; Io.Zon., 713, Trapp 1986, 150. To learn more about Nestor's background and social status see Diaconu 1970, 103–104; Angold 1997, 121; Madgearu 2003, 50–51; 2013, 80–81. Written sources call him a servant (δοῦλος) of Emperor Michael VII Dukas' father and a close housemate, practically a relative (οἰκειοτάτος), of the emperor. Sigillography confirms this data. Nestor was a servant of the Dukas dynasty. His background is unknown. Attaleiates argues that he was an Illyrian. This archaic ethnonym is sometimes related with Serbs or Vlachs. Madgearu presumes that Nestor may have been a local ruler in Duklja or Macedonia and transferred his authority to Constantine X. Bulgarian researchers consistently recognize Nestor as a Bulgarian. Cf. Zlatarski 1934, 156; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 99; Bozhilov, Giuzelev 1999, 405–406.

78 Mich.Att., 374/5; Scyl.Cont., 166; Io.Zon., 713, Trapp 1986, 150.

79 Io.Zon., 713: ἀρχηγός Πατζινάκων, ὅς ἐκαλεῖτο Τατούς. The reconstructed pronunciation of his name was *Tatu (Moravcsik 1983a, 302). Most researchers consider Zonaras' accounts reliable: Vasil'evskii 1908, 34–35; Spinei 2003, 137; Curta 2006, 299; Dudek 2007a, 108; Madgearu 2013a, 216; 2013, 80, 82. The last author wrongly indicates Attaleiates as the author of the statement that Tatus was a Pecheneg. The fact that well-informed Attaleiates did not comment on the leader's background is telling.

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settle in the city. Michael Attaleiates' account on the 'Scythians' in the Danube cities supports this hypothesis, but at the same time, also excludes the possibility of Tatus being a Pecheneg leader.

Nestor, realizing that winning the loyalty of Dristra's citizens would be impossible, joined the rebels. His decision may have been based on the fact that *logothete* Nikephoros had confiscated his estate and property due to his alleged improper administration of Empire funds.[80]

In 1075, the rebels, now allied with the Pechenegs, invaded Macedonia. Their actions were so merciless that Byzantine troops quartered near Adrianople did not dare oppose them. Nestor and his allies passed through Thrace and destroyed the Byzantine camp in Byzas. After reaching the outskirts of Constantinople, the rebels demanded that the Empire surrender *logothete* Nikephoros as the cause of all their misfortunes. They promised to leave the capital promptly afterward. The emperor refused to pay heed to such demands, which, in view of the lack of adequate defensive preparations, could have resulted in the city's defeat. However, Nestor unexpectedly decided to leave Constantinople and retreat to the north. His decision was caused by his suspicions that a group of Pechenegs sent to the capital as emissaries were plotting to kill the rebel leader.[81]

Nestor's motivations are clear: he wanted to reclaim the property and position *logothete* Nikephoros had stripped from him. Eliminating the influential eunuch would not only allow him to regain both his property and dignity, it would also change the Empire's unpopular policy towards Paristrion. This would most likely been another of the former vestarche's goals, especially if he had the support of the Danube cities' citizenry. Nestor was not proclaimed emperor, but he seems never to have had any such ambitions. It is however possible that he hoped his close relations with the Dukas dynasty would allow him to easily regain the emperor's trust and persuade him into making decisions favourable to him. He may have also wanted to avoid a conflict with the emperor and shift the rebels' focus to the hated eunuch.

The Pechenegs played a significant role here. Nestor planned to use them to implement his political plans. This type of behaviour would soon become the *modus operandi* of a number of Byzantine politicians involved in the Balkans. According to Hungarian sources, the precedence for this goes back to 1071 and duke Niketas, the leader of Belgrade's garrison. The Pechenegs would become something like mercenaries whose payment would be the right to plunder the cities being attacked. Their loyalty to Byzantine allies was anything but

80 Mich.Att., 374/5–376/7; Scyl.Cont., 166; Io.Zon. 713; Trapp 1986, 150.
81 Mich.Att., 378/9–382/3; Scyl.Cont., 166; Io.Zon., 713–714, Trapp 1986, 150.

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strong. Nestor witnessed this first-hand when he was forced to retreat from Constantinople without achieving his goals.

The Pechenegs took advantage of the weakness of the Byzantine Empire by organizing plundering expeditions in Thrace and Macedonia. The decade of the 1070s was a golden age for the nomads, who were free to loot both of these Byzantine provinces. The Empire's military leaders rarely tried to repel their attacks. John Bryennios, brother of Nikephoros, the duke of Dyrrachion and pretender to the throne,[82] routed groups of 'Scythians', most likely Pechenegs, a number of times. His final victory was in 1077 after his older brother had been proclaimed emperor.[83] This success resulted in the Pechenegs becoming one of the usurper's allies.

It is difficult to determine the extent of Nikephoros' control over the Pechenegs. According to Michael Attaleiates, who expressed a clear dislike of Bryennios, a pretender to the throne, was almost their hostage. The nomads were said to have laid siege to Adrianople, the ancestral seat of the Bryennios clan, and threatened to attack the Macedonian emperor and his supporters. During the siege, the Pechenegs also methodically looted neighbouring areas, stealing herds of cattle.[84] These events probably took place after the duke of Dyrrachion was proclaimed emperor, i.e., around the turn of 1077 and 1078. Nikephoros chose not to confront the enemy militarily, but instead took shelter in Adrianople and paid a handsome sum to convince the Pechenegs to end their siege: no less than 20 talents of gold and significant quantities of expensive fabric and silver dishware.[85] A number of significant factors seem to explain the restrained, if not defeatist, stance taken by the imperial pretender. Nikephoros could not undertake any major military action against the Pechenegs so soon before he began his fight for the crown. This would have caused him to lose an uneasy ally and risk their attacking Thrace and Macedonia, which were among his bases of political support.

Although Bryennios' show of restraint saved his alliance with the nomads, the citizens of Adrianople were not provided with a long-lasting peace. In the summer of 1078, following the defeat of Bryennios and his allies, the Pechenegs laid siege to the city once again, this time assisted by the Cumans. They are said to have set fire to the houses outside the city walls, causing the deaths of numerous people. According to Michael Attaleiates, the reason for this attack was the murder by the citizens of Adrianople of the nomads' emissaries to

82 Nic.Bryenn., III 4 (p. 212/3).
83 Nic.Bryenn., III 14 (p. 236/7).
84 Mich.Att., 476/7.
85 Mich.Att., 476/7–478/9; Io.Zon., 717; Trapp 1986, 153. Cf. Dudek 2009, 69–70.

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Bryennios.[86] The circumstances surrounding these events remain unclear, but the alleged perpetrators clearly had just cause to feel hate towards the nomads, who after settling in the Balkans carried out numerous acts of aggression against the people living in the region. An interesting fact is that the Pechenegs did not take their revenge immediately. Instead they waited until the fall of Nikephoros Bryennios, perhaps because their urge for revenge was curbed by their alliance with the usurper.

In fact, the Pechenegs had been among those who supported him against Nikephoros Botaneiates during the battle of Galabrye[87] (May 1078). The nomads showed little loyalty, however. All known accounts from the battle confirm their betrayal. The Pechenegs were ordered to make an attack from the rear on the men of Khoma, led by Constantine Katakalon. The nomads attacked the enemy, causing havoc and forcing Katakalon to retreat. However, instead of pursuing the scattered soldiers, they attacked the rearguard of Bryennios' army. After looting their allies' supply wagons and stealing their horses, they retreated to their own camp.[88]

The Pechenegs shared a role in Bryennios' ultimate defeat, but this did not end the unrest in the Balkans. The new emperor, Nikephoros III Botaneiates was forced to suppress a rebellion led by Basilakes, the new duke of Dyrrachion. Like his predecessor Nikephoros Bryennios, Basilakes also tried to use the Pechenegs for his own purposes, but he too ended up achieving very little. At the same time the duke was under siege in Thessaloniki by the *domestikos* Alexios I Komnenos, the nomads, supported by the Cumans, were attacking Adrianople. As mentioned above, they set the city's outskirts ablaze, but retreated upon learning that Byzantine forces were approaching.[89]

Near the end of the 1070s, the Pechenegs entered into an alliance against Nikephoros III Botaneiates with Lekas, a Byzantine renegade linked to the nomads by marriage. Lekas ultimately submitted to the emperor's authority,[90] but this did not mean the nomads followed suit. Nikephoros Bryennios, the son or grandson of the unlucky pretender to the emperor's throne, mentions

86 Mich.Att., 348/9; Scyl.Cont., 184. *Scylitzes Continuatus* attributes the Pechenegs' death to Nikephoros Bryennios.

87 A town located in Thrace, 12 km north-west of Selymbria. Written sources and modern historical literature provide numerous variations of its name: Kalabrye, Galabrye, Kalobrye, Kalabria, Kalaure, Calavrytae, Kalavritai. Cf. Külzer 2008, 421–422; Dudek 2009, 70.

88 On the battle and the Pechenegs' involvement: Mich.Att., 528/9; Nic.Bryenn., IV 6–7, 9–13 (pp. 269–279); An.Komn., I 5–6 (pp. 20–27); Sewter 2009, 17–23. For a detailed analysis of the course of the battle: Tobias 1979, 193–211.

89 Mich.Att., 348/9; Scyl.Cont., 184 (v. 1–5); Io.Zon., 723; Trapp 1986, 156.

90 Mich.Att., 550/1; Scyl.Cont., 184 (v. 13–21).

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in his *Material for History* some 'Scythians' who devastated the lands between Niš and Scupi around 1079.[91] Alexios Komnenos marched against them, but the nomads, upon receiving word of his forces' approach, retreated beyond the Balkan Mountains. In 1080, a campaign led by Leo Diabatenos momentarily pacified the Pechenegs and the Cumans, with both groups agreeing to enter into an alliance with the Empire.[92]

In terms of the relations between the Empire and its 'Scythian' subjects, the 1070s seems to have reflected a continuation of the *status quo*, rather than a turning point. The weakness of the Empire and the chaos it was struggling with provided the Pechenegs with additional freedom, and as a result, an increase in their attacks. Both Byzantine pretenders to the throne and renegades like Nestor and Lekas entered into alliances with the nomads, which to some extent legitimized their actions. However, the Pechenegs' loyalty to the Empire now was no weaker, nor stronger than during the two previous decades. It is difficult to assign any specific political aim to their actions. Their behavior was largely defined by external circumstances. Changes in these circumstances, like the consolidation of Nikephoros III Botaneiates' power and the stabilization of the political situation in the Balkans, encouraged the Pechenegs to keep the peace and enter into alliances with Constantinople.

As the influence of the Byzantine Empire declined, the Danube cities grew increasingly independent, resulting in important changes. The loss of support from Constantinople, meant that local leaders, backed by the surrounding population, assumed greater autonomy and authority. These leaders naturally sought to develop friendly relations with both the Pechenegs settled in Paristrion and the barbarian groups living north and north-east of the Lower Danube. The arrival of the Cumans in the Balkans, first noted in the summer of 1078, was therefore not accidental. Their participation in joint raids with the Pechenegs would not have been possible if not for the neutrality (or even cooperation) of the Danube cities' archons, who acted as intermediaries in contacts between these two nomad ethnic groups in the 1080s.[93] We can assume that before this time they refrained from interfering in the affairs of the barbarian groups living on either sides of the Danube and made no efforts to impede their migration across the river. The independence of the Danube cities and their relations with the nomads led to the Empire losing control over Paristrion, which posed a danger to the rich Byzantine provinces south of the Balkans on the foreground of Constantinople. With the Danube no longer

91 Nic.Bryenn., IV 30 (p. 299).

92 Scyl.Cont., 185 (v. 21–23); Mich.Att., 550/1–552/3. Cf. Arutiunova 1972, 115.

93 Cf. the following part of the present chapter.

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serving as a barrier, the Pechenegs and other nomads from the north could easily use the Paristrion as a starting point to invade the Byzantine territories south of the Balkans.

7.1.4 *The Final Years (1081–1091)*

It was only a matter of time before the Byzantine political elite came to understand this fact. This moment most likely came when the former commander of the field army in the West, Alexios I Komnenos, ascended to power as emperor.[94] Having worked at the side of Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates, the new *basileus* was well acquainted with the Pechenegs and their nature. He had fought with them several times in the late 1070s and understood that for the then badly truncated empire, the Pechenegs had become a serious threat. Following the loss of the entire Anatolian interior to the Seljuks, the Balkan provinces[95] became the backbone of Byzantium. Anyone who violated the region's security would be essentially threatening the Empire's very existence.

Meanwhile, early in the reign of Alexios I, the Balkans had become the aim of expansion not only for the Pechenegs but for the Normans, as well. The latter were much more dangerous because there were not satisfied merely with pillaging, but also sought to bring Byzantium's territories under its rule permanently. Robert Guiscard, the Normans' leader, who in the ill-fated year of 1071 had conquered Bari and pushed the Empire out of southern Italy,[96] made an initially successful attempt in 1082 to take over Byzantine Illyria by invading Dyrrachium.[97] If this annexation had continued it would have been disastrous for the Empire because the Normans would have captured a key bridgehead at the beginning of the Roman *Via Egnatia*, the road leading towards Constantinople. The spread of their expansion along this important transport route would mean the end of Byzantium's rule over the Balkans, and probably the end of the Empire itself, as well. Alexios I therefore immediately took decisive action to counteract this threat.

As fierce battles were being fought over Dyrrachium, the Pechenegs chose to break the peace agreement they had concluded in 1080. Some time around

94 For a general description of the events of 1081–1091: Vasil'evskii 1908, 45–107; Zlatarski 1934, 182–208; Diaconu 1970, 112–120, 130–133; 1978, 35–40; Malamut 1995, 134–142; Stephenson 2000, 101–103; Spinei 2003, 140–145; Curta 2006, 300–302; Meško 2012, 121–223; 2013, 197–205.

95 Ostrogorski 1967, 290; Angold 1997, 129–130; Treadgold 1997, 614–615, 673–675; Lilie 2003, 331–335.

96 Cheynet 2006a, 47; Bonarek 2011, 68–69.

97 An.Komn., I 16 (pp. 50–54), IV 1–8 (pp. 120–140); V 1 (pp. 141–143); Sewter 2009, 45–49, 108–130. Cf. Angold 1997, 130–131; Dudek 1999, 48–54; Cheynet 2006a, 47.

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the end of 1083, they crossed the Balkans to attack the Byzantine provinces.[98] Pakourianos, the *domestikos* of the army of the West, managed to defeat them. However, his victory, mentioned in the *typikon* (rules) for the monastery he founded in Bačkovo,[99] was not complete, as Pakourianos also mentions being held captive by the Cumans and being ransomed by the autocrator Alexios I. This unintended hint seems to prove that the victory of the *domestikos* over the Pechenegs was accompanied by a defeat suffered at the hands of the Cumans, though perhaps at a somewhat later time. This would mean that at the end of 1083 another joint invasion by both of these peoples may have taken place.

Pakourianos' success did not make a lasting impression on the Pechenegs, as we hear about plundering raids being carried out by them in the Balkans the very next year. This time, the Pechenegs allied themselves with a group of Paulicians who had rebelled against Alexios I. These heretics had lived in the vicinity of Philippopolis since the tenth century. Due to their great value in combat, they had been brought to this area to settle by John Tzimiskes, who gave them the task of defending Thrace against attacks by the Bulgarians. Seeking to expand his forces, Alexios I recruited 3,000 Paulicians, who had been part of the Byzantine army beaten by the Normans at Dyrrachium in October 1081. Later, however, the heretics failed to carry through on their promise to provide military assistance, thus earning the distrust of Alexios. The emperor decided to take preventive measures to safeguard the Empire against the Paulicians' rebellion. His decision stemmed from the location of the Paulicians seats, centred around Philippopolis, from which they could easily cut off the lines of communication linking the Balkan provinces with the capital.[100] This posed a great danger to the whole of Byzantium. Alexios mustered the Paulicians under the guise of ordering a military inspection, then took them prisoner and ordered the community to be dispersed. The leaders were expelled from the Empire and the assets of the heretics were confiscated.[101] This did not end the matter, however, because Traulos, a Paulician convert who had remained in

98 On the subject of dating these events: Arutiunova 1972, 118; Doimi de Frankopan 1996, 278–281; Stephenson 2000, 101.

99 Georg.Pak., 42/43; Jordan 2000, 526.

100 An.Komn., V 3.2 (pp. 146–147); Sewter 2009, 133. Cf. Obolensky 1948, 190; Stephenson 2000, 101.

101 An.Komn., VI 2 (pp. 170–171); Sewter 2009, 155–156. Cf. Obolensky 1948, 191; Angold 1997, 132. Some of the Paulicians remained, however, in the imperial service. They fought against the Pechenegs in the battle of Dristra. According to John Zonaras (Io.Zon. XVIII 23, p. 741) the Paulicians' tagma was to be disbanded only after the battle of Lebounion Hill (see below).

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the emperor's service since rising to the office of *domestikos* under Nikephoros Botaneiates, betrayed the emperor after learning about the fate of his former coreligionists. He then fled to Beliatova, a fortress north of Philippopolis.[102]

Traulos realized he could not accomplish much with the limited military resources at his disposal. He therefore formed an alliance with the Pechenegs and several independent chieftains who controlled fortresses on the Danube. The most powerful of these was the previously mentioned Tatus-Tatos, who ruled the city of Dristra.[103] This alliance, in particular, posed a particularly serious threat to the interests of Constantinople. As a result, in the coming years successive waves of nomads would be able to cross the Danube unimpeded, intensifying the chaos in the Balkans.

The first of these groups appeared in the region around 1085. Anna Komnena, the only source to describe these events, mentions that 'some Scythian tribe'[104] appeared on the Danube around that the time. The tribe had been forced to leave its former homelands under pressure from 'Sauromatians'. After reaching an agreement with the commanders of the border fortifications, they crossed the river and entered the territory of Paristrion. These newcomers first seized and pillaged several fortified towns. However, they then turned to more peaceful activities, and began cultivating the land, sowing millet and wheat.

The account of this migration provided by Anna Komnena is rather unclear, allowing for a number of plausible, but mutually exclusive interpretations. It is usually assumed that this event took place in 1086. However, if we take into account that the newcomers were said to have cultivated the land during breaks between plundering expeditions, and considering that earlier in the same year they defeated a military force dispatched by the empire, and were defeated by another, it seems more likely that their migration might have actually occurred in 1085. A more important issue, however, is the identity of the immigrants. They are most often identified as Pechenegs. This in turn has sometimes led to the conclusion, one generally lacking strong support in source materials, that a major group of steppe-dwellers lived north of the Danube long after the migration of Tyrach.[105] Indeed, in Anna Komnena's narrative, the invasion of this

102 An.Komn.,VI 4.2–3 (p. 174); Sewter 2009, 158–159. Cf. Soustal 1991, 197.

103 An.Komn., VI 4.4 (p. 174); Sewter 2009, 159. Cf. Obolensky 1948, 191–192.

104 γένος τί σκυθικὸν. An.Komn. VI 14.1 (p. 199); Sewter 2009, 182.

105 Meško 2012, 146; 2013, 182–187, 191–196. The researcher, following mainly the findings of Hungarian historians (most of all Ferenc Makk) brings the thesis about the presence of the Pechenegs north of the Danube to its extremes. Among other things, he admits that Kutesk, known to Hungarian sources, and Tzelgu, mentioned by Anna Komnena, were the leaders of two major Pecheneg groups, the first of which was said to be in Wallachia, and the second in Moldova. Apart from questionable interpretations of written sources,

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'Scythian tribe' is depicted as a turning point, and more precisely as the beginning of a series of events that led to an exhausting war between Byzantium and the Pechenegs, a war that would ultimately bring about the destruction of the latter. It is natural to identify these 'Scythian' newcomers with some Pecheneg fraction. Such reasoning seems all the more justified given that Komnena repeatedly substitutes their proper ethnonym with some archaic equivalent. On the other hand, it is hard not to notice that 'Scythians' is a very broad *nomen collectivum* that could refer to a variety of northern nomadic peoples. It can thus be used in cases when an author is unable to precisely determine or has difficulties defining the ethnic identity of the people under discussion. The learned princess seems to have found herself in such a situation in her account of the aforementioned migration. Possible evidence for this fact is her use of the indefinite pronoun 'some'. In 1085 or 1086, the Danube may have been crossed by a nomadic ethnos other than the Pechenegs, or a union composed of various ethnic fractions, including Pechenegs, that had once lived on the Black Sea steppe. In addition, there is no reason to assume this wave of migration was particularly large. It must have been considerable, since it was noted by Byzantine sources, but it was certainly not on the scale of the previous great migrations of the Pechenegs and Uzes. Byzantium reacted only when the newcomers, supported by Traulos and his Pecheneg allies, began to threaten the provinces south of the Balkans.

Alexios I sent an army led by *domestikos* of the West Gregorios Pakourianos against the aggressors. However, driven by excessive bravado, Pakourianos attacked an enemy force much larger than his own, resulting in the defeat of his army at Beliatova and his being killed in battle.[106] A second army commanded by Tatikios managed to defeat the nomads by the Euros River (today the Maritsa) and regain the booty they had plundered. The Byzantine commander retreated with these acquired goods to Philippopolis. He soon left the city, as news reached him of the approach of another Pecheneg force. This time no battle ensued. After two days passed with neither party attacking the opposing forces, the nomads withdrew through Sidera Pass.[107] The difficult year 1086 thus ended with limited success for the Byzantines. Although they

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it is worth noting that Meško completely ignores archaeological materials that confirm the presence of nomads in Moldova, but at the same time shows that they barely left any traces in Wallachia. Diaconu 1970, 13, 39–49; Spinei 1986, 85–86; Ioniţă 2004, 469; 2005, 110–115; 2013, 115–150. For more moderate positions regarding the presence of the Pechenegs north of the Danube after 1050: Spinei 2003, 117–120; Curta 2006, 306. See also the part of the present chapter devoted to relations between the Pechenegs and Hungary.

106 An.Komn., VI 14.3 (p. 200); Sewter 2009, 183.

107 An.Komn., VI 14. 4–7 (pp. 200–202); Sewter 2009, 183–185.

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managed to stop the Pechenegs from raiding of the *themata* located to the south of the Balkans unchecked. However, Tatikios's victories did not lead to a long-lasting peace.

In the spring of 1087, the Danube was crossed by yet another group of nomads which, like the previous one, was composed of people of mixed ethnicity. Among the steppe-dwellers, there were probably Cumans, Pechenegs and Hungarians, all led by the latter group's dethroned king Solomon. The commander of this 'Scythian army', as Anna Komnena refers to them, was Tzelgu, whose ethnicity remains a mystery to this day. He was most likely a Cuman or a Pecheneg. Tzelgu and his army crossed the Balkans and invaded Thrace, where they conquered and plundered the city of Kharioupolis (today Hayrabolu). At Koule (a village located between Ainos and Constantinople), these 'Scythians' were intercepted and defeated by Byzantine troops under the command of Marianos Maurokatalon and Bempetziotes. Tzelgu was killed in battle and his nomad army withdrew to the Danube.[108]

The above-mentioned events during the years 1083–1087 followed a very similar pattern, according to which the Pechenegs repeatedly invaded the Empire's Balkan provinces, most often allied with other nomadic tribes (usually the Cumans) or supported by groups from within the empire that were at odds with Constantinople (such as the Paulicians). The position taken by the archons of the fortresses at crossing points on the Danube was also surprising, as they either responded passively to the steppe inhabitants entering the Paristrion area or actively cooperated with them. Yet these were not immigrants, but groups of aggressors for whom the Byzantine *thema* represented a transit zone leading towards the main objective of their armed expeditions – the affluent regions south of the Balkans. Experience gained from this situation led the Byzantines to the conclusion that the more important provinces would not be safe until the Empire had regained control of Paristrion, and this would only happen after the Danube fortresses had been brought back under the control of Constantinople and the Pechenegs destroyed.[109]

In practice, this conclusion meant that Byzantium would have to undertake offensive actions in areas north of the Balkan Mountains. A military expedition of this sort had not been carried out by the imperial army since the time of Isaac I Komnenos, so it is hardly surprising that the decision of Emperor Alexios to send his troops into enemy territory was met with strong resistance from senior commanders. Ultimately, however, the opinion of younger

108 An.Komn., VII 1.1–2 (pp. 203–204); Sewter 2009, 186–187.

109 Cf. Ostrogorski 1967, 290; Angold 1997, 130, 132; Stephenson 2000, 102.

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strategoi to confront the 'Scythians' in Paristrion prevailed.[110] The late spring and summer of 1087 therefore represented a turning point in the history of warfare between the Pechenegs and Byzantium. The objectives of Alexios' campaign included both subduing the nomads and regaining control over the Danube fortresses. To this end, the emperor transported one part of the army under the command of Georgios Euphorbenos by boat to Dristra, while with the rest of the army was to march across the Balkans.[111]

Before the campaign had even begun, the Pechenegs tried to use diplomatic means to end it. They sent 150 emissaries to Alexios to propose a peace agreement that included a promise to supply 30,000 horsemen for the emperor's future military expeditions.[112] This move by the Pechenegs' recalled their behaviour when dealing with Isaac Komnenos in 1059. In both cases the Pechenegs sought to avoid armed conflict merely by offering to place themselves formally under the emperor's authority. Bearing in mind his previous dealings with the Pechenegs, the Emperor knew that such declarations were of little value. Alexios thus used an anticipated partial solar eclipse, calling it a sign from God, as proof of the nomads' foul intentions and justification for his rejecting their offer.[113] Afterward, he and his army crossed the Sidera Pass, and after a few days' march, reached the walls of Dristra with the intention of laying siege to the city.[114] However, it soon turned out that he lacked sufficient forces to successfully take Dristra's two citadels. Ultimately, continually harassed by the Pechenegs, whose forces wiped out a number of raiding parties sent out to forage and succeeded in generating fear in the imperial camp, the emperor decided to take the advice of some of his commanders and force a decisive confrontation with the nomads. The battle ended in a major defeat for the Byzantines, with the emperor nearly losing his life.[115] The imperial army was now in complete disarray, which meant the nomads would be free to ravage the Balkan provinces with impunity. However, they failed to make use of their great victory. The reason for this was the arrival of the Cumans, who had been called in by Tatos, the commander of the forces in Dristra, to support the Pechenegs in their fight against the Byzantine army. Despite their late arrival, they demanded a share of the spoils. When the victorious Pechenegs refused

110 An.Komn., VII 2.3,5 (pp. 205, 206); Sewter 2009, 188, 188–189.
111 An.Komn., VII 2.1–3 (pp. 204–205); Sewter 2009, 187–188.
112 An.Komn., VII 2.7 (p. 207); Sewter 2009, 189–190.
113 An.Komn., VII 2.8 (pp. 207–208), Sewter 2009, 190. This eclipse is usually dated to 1 August, 1087. Cf. Ferrari D'Occhieppo 1974, 179–184; Malamut 1995, 136; Dudek 2009, 246.
114 An.Komn., VII 3.1–2 (pp. 208–209); Sewter 2009, 190–191.
115 An.Komn., VII 3.3–12 (pp. 209–214); Sewter 2009, 191–196.

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to comply, the Cumans attacked their would-be allies and won.[116] This clash is quite interesting because it illustrates a kind of hierarchy that existed between the peoples of the steppe. Michael Attaleiates described the Cumans as a 'most warlike nation'[117] when writing about the invasion of Adrianople, which they carried out with the Pechenegs. This event, dated to the year 1078, gave rise to a whole series of joint plundering expeditions by these two ethne. The question then arises whether this refusal to divide the booty did not represent more than a mere rejection by the Pechenegs of an unjustified claim? Perhaps it also signified a breaking of the alliance between the two peoples. This assumption seems justified when we look at the later reports about the relations between the Pechenegs and Cumans, which after the incident of 1087 became distinctly negative in character.

For the moment, however, this rather unexpected course of events improved the already very difficult situation of Alexios I. After his defeat, the ruler took refuge in Beroia (today's Stara Zagora), from where he made an attempt to ransom Byzantine prisoners in order to incorporate them back into his army. Meanwhile, following their defeat by the Cumans, the Pechenegs moved their forces to the vicinity of Markellai (Markeli), where they set up camp.[118] Their chose to encamp near the ruins of the fortress, so close to the former Bulgarian-Byzantine border,[119] may indicate that their further plans involved setting out to plunder the Byzantine provinces. It is not impossible, however, that the nomads simply wanted to withdraw from regions threatened by Cuman attacks. Apart from the mention made by Anna Komnena, this last interpretation also seems to be confirmed by the Pechenegs' choice to move their encampments further south in the years that followed. Their concerns about the return of the Cumans were also shared by Alexios I Komnenos. This situation ultimately prompted both sides to make peace with one another, a move later praised in a speech by Archbishop Theophylact of Ohrid.[120] The resulting peace treaty, which was most likely concluded late in 1087, lasted until spring of the following year, when the Pechenegs, realizing they were no

116 An.Komn., VII 5.1 (p. 216); Sewter 2009, 197–198.

117 Mich.Att., 348/9; Scyl.Cont., 184 (v. 1–5).

118 An.Komn. VII 6.1–2 (p. 218); Sewter 2009, 198–199.

119 The exact location of the Markellai fortress is under discussion. Most likely, it should be identified with the ruins of Hisarlŭk, near Karnobat, in today's Bulgaria. Its location indicates that its purpose was to safeguard the pass at the south-eastern edge of the Balkan Mountains. Swoboda 1967a, 179–180; Kazhdan 1991, 1300; Soustal 1991, 348–349.

120 An.Komn., VII 6.2–3 (pp. 218–219); Sewter 2009, 199–200; Theoph.Achr. 222–227. Theophylact's speech is dated 6 January, 1088. Malamut 1995, 138–140; Stephenson 2000, 102. For other dating, one year later: Dudek 2009, 252.

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longer threatened by an invasion by the Cumans, nor by the possibility of these nomads forming an alliance with Byzantium, violated their agreement with the Empire.[121]

They did so by seizing Philippopolis. Alexios did not possess sufficient forces to oppose the nomads in an open fight, so he adopted hit-and-run tactics. Over the next year, he attempted to delay the opponent's march, prevent the capture of further strong points, and destroy smaller Pecheneg units whenever he could. When the two opposing armies reached Kypsella, south of Adrianople, the emperor sent out ambassadors to negotiate a truce with the nomads. They persuaded the Pechenegs to sign a new treaty, but it was quickly violated. In late 1088, the Pechenegs left Kypsella and seized Taurokomos, where they spent the winter.[122] This was probably the first time in this people's history when a major part of the group wintered south of the Balkan Mountains. This seems to confirm the assumption that the Pechenegs sought to move their settlements southward.

When spring finally came, the Pechenegs resumed their military actions by marching on Kharioupolis. Alexios I sent against them a newly formed two-thousand-strong unit of *Arkhontopouloi*, i.e., the sons of fallen soldiers. They were supposed to strike the Pechenegs' wagons from the rear, but instead of surprising the enemy they were ambushed themselves and suffered considerable losses. According to Anna Komnena, 300 young Byzantines were killed. After this success, the Pechenegs seized Kharioupolis and then headed towards Apros (between Rhaidestos and Malkara), plundering everything they encountered along the way. Wishing to prevent them from taking another city, the emperor's forces occupied them first. The unit commanded by Tatikios also managed to destroy one group of the Pechenegs that had been sent out at dawn to forage.[123]

This hit-and-run war probably continued throughout the year 1089 and even 1090 as well. Though he sought to avoid a decisive battle, Alexios tried to weaken his opponents' forces and restrict their room for manoeuvre. As the foreground of Constantinople, Thrace remained the primary area of operations. The Emperor fought the Pechenegs first in the area of Rousion (Tur. Keshan), and then at Tzouroulon, 36 kilometres away from the capital. Despite scoring victories in both battles, Alexios failed to achieve anything more than

121 An.Komn., VII 6.3 (pp. 218–219); Sewter 2009, 199–200. The Chronology of the Pecheneg-Byzantium war in the narrative of Anna Komnena is unclear, however, the winter of 1087/88 probably brought a pause in their struggles, confirmed by the peace agreement that was broken in the spring of 1088. See Meško 2011, 145.

122 AnKomn., VII 6.4–6 (pp. 219–220); Sewter 2009, 200–201. Cf. Meško 2011, 145.

123 An.Komn., VII 7.1–3 (pp. 220–221); Sewter 2009, 201–202.

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a temporary halt in the enemy's march on Constantinople, forcing them to retreat to the area between Little Nicaea and Boulgarophygon. The Pechenegs set up their encampments and spent the winter there.[124]

The spring of 1091 was to bring about a resolution to the situation. Nothing, however, indicated that the winner would be the Byzantine ruler. His situation had become nearly hopeless, as the nomads found a new ally in Tzakhas, the Emir of Smyrna. He was one of the Seljuk rulers who had received a share in the heritage of Suleiman, the first Sultan of Rum. Tzakhas had taken advantage of the weakened state of the Byzantine Empire in the 1080s to expand his rule on the east coast of the Aegean Sea (including the cities of Klazomenai and Phocaea). He also assumed control over the islands of Lesbos, Samos and Chios.[125] He was able to do so thanks to a fleet built for him by a resident of Smyrna.[126] It cannot be ruled out that Tzakhas had already established a partnership with the Pechenegs in 1090,[127] but it was only early the following year that, through his envoys, he called on them to conquer the Thracian Chersonese (today the Galipoli peninsula).[128] If such a military operation were successful, communication between Constantinople and the Aegean Sea would be cut off. The Emir of Smyrna would then be free to attack from the sea. Some scholars assume that he would have then been able to direct his expansion towards the eastern shores of Greece[129] or, in an extremely unfavourable scenario for the Empire, even to attack Constantinople itself. Tzakhas, who had once been held as a prisoner-of-war in the court of Nikephoros Botaneiates, understood that the Empire's capital could only be successfully attacked from the sea.[130] Having realized the intentions of the emir, Alexios Komnenos tried to prevent him from cooperating with the Pechenegs. To this end, he occupied and fortified the port of Ainos, located at the mouth of the Euros River.[131] Maintaining control over this area allowed the *basileus* to prevent any communication between Tzakhas and the Pechenegs.

Alexios' situation was nevertheless still very difficult. His forces were not strong enough to defeat the Pechenegs, and his situation was further complicated soon after by the arrival of a Cuman army of 40,000 men, led by Togortak

124 An.Komn., VII 9–11 (pp. 227–235); Sewter 2009, 207–214. Cf. Meško 2011, 147.
125 An.Komn., VII 8.1–2 (pp. 222–223); Sewter 2009, 202–203. Cf. Cahen 1948, 52; Angold 1997, 133; Dudek 2007a, 120–122; Cheynet 2006a, 51.
126 An.Komn., VII 8.1 (p. 222); Sewter 2009, 202.
127 An.Kom., VII 8.6 (pp. 224–225); Sewter 2009, 204–205.
128 An.Komn., VIII 3.2 (p. 241); Sewter 2009, 219–220.
129 Angold 1997, 133.
130 Ostrogorski 1967, 293; Runciman 1995, 77.
131 An.Komn., VIII 3.4–5 (p. 242); Sewter 2009, 220–221.

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and Maniak. Had the Cumans combined their forces with the Pechenegs, the Empire's defeat would have been certain. The emperor, however, managed to gain the support of the Cumans, secured with a pledge of loyalty and a number of hostages.[132]

The Pechenegs quickly realized the danger of such an alliance and endeavoured to have it broken. They sent envoys to Alexios with the intention of presenting him with peace proposals. The emperor held back his response, hoping to use the time spent in negotiations to increase his military potential.[133] His previous experiences had convinced him that no peace treaty with the Pechenegs had any value. Anna Komnena wrote that the Pechenegs also simultaneously entered into secret negotiations with the Cumans. Despite their attempts at double-crossing 'diplomacy', they were unable to convince either side to break the agreement.

On 29 April 1091, the Pechenegs were forced to fight the allied armies on their own. The battle took place near the Lebounion Hill, on the left bank of the Euros River. It brought a final resolution to a war which had begun in 1083. The extremely fierce battle lasted one day and ended with the defeat of the Pechenegs. Some of them died in battle, some were murdered by Byzantine soldiers afterwards, and others were sold into slavery. A large group of nomads, including the women and children, were ordered by Alexios I to settle in the *thema* of Moglena on the Vardar (Axios) River, entrusting them with the task of supplying light cavalry units.[134]

The result of the Battle of Lebounion was surprising, especially considering previous armed encounters between the Empire and the Pechenegs. This people – who not long ago had threatened the Empire's capital and managed to inflict a serious defeat on Alexios Komnenos – was now almost completely annihilated. The Byzantine soldiers and commanders participating in the battle had a similar impression, as can be seen in Anna Komnena's narrative.[135] Admittedly, some scholars are inclined to assume that Alexios' victories were not as great as the learned princess seems to assert.[136] Nevertheless, it is a fact

132 An.Komn., VIII 4.2–3 (pp. 243–244); Sewter 2009, 221–222.

133 An.Komn., VIII 5.1 (pp. 245–246); Sewter 2009, 223–224.

134 Io.Zon. XVIII 23 (p. 741), Trapp 1986, 167. Cf. Vasil'evskii 1908, 107; Angold 1997, 133.

135 An.Komn., VIII 5.9 (p. 249); Sewter 2009, 226–227.

136 Macartney 1929, 350; Zlatarski 1934, 366–367 (The researcher admits that Lebounion was not as terrible a defeat for the Pechenegs as Anna Komnena describes it, because some of them survived on the Black Sea steppe. At the same time, however, he states that they lost their political independence in favour of the Cumans); Diaconu 1970, 133; 1978, 40 (Petre Diaconu represents a view similar to Vasil Zlatarski, however, he acknowledges that Lebounion meant the end of the threat of the Pechenegs to Byzantium). Cf. also argumentation described in the next paragraph of this chapter.

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that the Battle of Lebounion put an end to the existence of the Pechenegs as an independent ethnos.

7.1.5 *Epilogue: Beroia 1122*

In 1121, 30 years after this battle and in the fifth year of the reign of John II Komnenos, son of the victor at Lebounion, an event took place that cannot be omitted from a study devoted to the Pechenegs.[137] According to the statements of John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates, in this year a group of 'Scythians' crossed the Empire's border on the Danube. The first of these authors states that a massive force of nomads invaded Macedonia. John Komnenos went to face them, but all fighting had to be halted due to the approach of winter (1121/22). The *basileus* stopped at Beroia (Stara Zagora) and devoted all his free time to preparations for a spring campaign and diplomatic efforts aiming at disrupting the unity of the 'Scythians'. A battle took place in the spring of 1122, during which the army of the nomads was crushed. Some of the nomad soldiers, however, withdrew to their camp and fortified it by fastening wagons together and covering them with cowhides, in an effort to hold off the imperial army. The troops of John Komnenos had a hard time breaking through the 'Scythians" defences. Only when the emperor sent Anglo-Saxon mercenaries armed with axes into the battle, did they managed to break through the nomad's defences and ultimately defeat them. The surviving prisoners-of-war were relocated within the Empire's territory as military settlers.[138]

John Kinnamos' account was confirmed by Niketas Choniates. In his highly sophisticated literary account of John II Komnenos' war with the 'Scythians', he adds only two pieces of information not noted by his predecessor. According to Choniates, the invaders occupied Thrace and ravaged the majority of Macedonia. Moreover, and much more importantly, after returning to the capital the emperor established a 'Pecheneg festival'[139] to commemorate his victory over the 'Scythians'. This information became the basis for a quite common belief in modern scholarship that the mysterious nomads defeated at

137 The mentioned events are usually dated to 1121–1122. However, some researches admit that the events could have taken place one year later, in 1122–1123. Cf. Ivanov, Lubotsky 2010, 595–603.

138 Io.Cinn., I 3 (pp. 7–8); Brand 1976, 15–16. In his translation Charles M. Brand changes the name 'Scythians' to 'Pechenegs' without informing the reader about the original ethnonym.

139 Nic.Chon., 13–16; Magoulias 1984, 10–11. Τοιαύτην νίκην περιφανῆ κατὰ Σκυθῶν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀράμενος καὶ μέγιστον στήσας τρόπαιον τὰς εὐχὰς θεῷ ἀποδίδωσι, *τὴν τῶν Πετζινάκων λεγομένην ἐς ἡμᾶς τελεὴν* εἰς ἀναμνηστήρια τῶν πεπραγμένων ἀποτάξας καὶ χαριστήρια.

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Beroia were, in fact, Pechenegs, or that they may have been an important, if not the major, part of an alliance of (ostensibly 'Scythian') nomads.[140]

Due to exceptionally fortunate circumstances, the events related to the invasion in 1121 and 1122 were noted not only by the above-mentioned Byzantine sources, but also by a number of authors belonging to completely independent literary traditions. The war with the 'Scythians' most likely represented an episode in an ethnic migration that was noted by neighbouring political powers on the Black Sea steppe. In addition, the Battle of Beroia and its circumstances were also described in a chronicle compiled by Michael the Syrian, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, in the twelfth century, who in turn relied on the knowledge of these events possessed by the Bishop of Edessa, a contemporary of Emperor John II Komnenos. This account in many respects corroborates the information provided by both Byzantine historians, but it also contains significant differences. Michael the Syrian recalls how cautiously the Empire dealt with the nomads marching on Constantinople. The Emperor wanted to make peace with them; however, when the nomads split up and began to enter cities, including Constantinople, and the emperor's very camp, he ordered them to be held captive, and he himself attacked their main camp. The siege of the steppe-dwellers' camp, which had been fortified with wagons, lasted several days. Ultimately, the Emperor ordered his troops to storm the defenders' positions. The camp was successfully taken, and many of the nomads were killed or taken captive. The most important element of the description provided by the Patriarch Michael, however, is the fact that the ethnos with whom the Byzantine Emperor fought was the Cumans.[141] The credibility of this statement is questioned, mainly due to the lack of confirmation by other sources and the allegedly incorrect location of the battle site. These circumstances are said to also discredit his reference to the Cumans.[142]

140 Kurtz 1907, 86 (explicit identification of the invaders as the Pechengs); Rasovskii 1933, 18–19; Bibikov 1999, 199–228; Curta 2006, 312–314; Spinei 2003, 150–151; 2009, 126; Kozlov 2011, 14–15; 2014, 93–99.

141 Mich.Syr., XV 12 (pp. 206–207).

142 Kozlov 2011, 13. The researcher acknowledges that Michael the Syrian most likely meant the Pechenegs, whom he mistakenly called the Cumans, as he used the ethnonym to describe all nomadic peoples fighting against Byzantium. Apart from the fact that this reasoning does not prove anything, and only expands the circle of ethne that can be identified with the term 'Cumans', as described by the Syrian patriarch, it should be noted that Kozlov himself disavowed his argument, stating that there are very few, he claims, cases when Michael the Syrian correctly identified the nomadic enemies of the Empire (e.g., his mention of the expedition of Isaac Komnenos against the Pechenegs in 1059).

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On the other hand, some scholars take a much less critical stance towards the information contained in a work written in honour of John II Komnenos.[143] Theodore Prodromos, the author of the epitaph, wrote it in the form of memoirs in which the deceased ruler spins a tale of his achievements, including his military successes. In speaking about his defeated enemies, John Komnenos mentions a 'western gathering of Getae' and the 'Scythian Chimera'.[144] These verses are supposed to be a reminiscence of the Battle of Beroia. They are also the basis for the thesis that the Uzes also took part in the battle. In Middle Byzantine literature, the Uzes appeared sporadically under the archaic ethnonym of Getae.[145]

The invasion of 1121/1122 was most likely a consequence of ethnic migration set in motion by the Rus' prince Vladimir Monomakh. The ruler initially welcomed refugees from the steppe and allowed them to settle in the territories under his control. According to accounts included in the chronicles, in 1121 Vladimir drove out the Berendei, while the Torks (Uzes) and Pechenegs 'fled of their own accord'.[146] The chronological concurrence of this event with the invasion of the 'Scythians' under discussion here is indeed striking. These exiles were forced onto the Black Sea steppe, which was then controlled by the Cumans, and was thus an unwelcoming environment for them. In all likelihood, they then departed for the lower Danube. In this respect, Dmitrii Rasovski's nearly century-old interpretation remains relevant.[147] All that needs to be changed is the incomprehensible and unjustified reluctance of some researchers to accept that when a group consisting of some or all of these refugees carried out raids on the Balkans, the Cumans were probably among them. As we have seen, starting in 1078 cooperation between this ethnos and the Pechenegs during raids is confirmed by Byzantine sources. There is also no significant reason to reject the information given by Michael the Syrian. On the contrary, it seems that the author pointed out the most important

143 Bibikov 1999, 207–212; Kozlov 2011, 15.

144 Prodromos, XXV 35–37 (p. 336).

145 Moravcsik 1983a, 111.

146 According to the *Primary Russian Chronicle*, after the victories of Rus' princes over the Cumans in 1103 and 1116, a certain transfer of power over the groups of the Pechenegs and Torks (Uzes) could have taken place, as they fought on the side of the Cumans in both battles. PVL 1, AM 6611 (1103), col. 279: After winning the battle, the Rus' took over the camps (*vezhe*) of the Cumans, which were complete with livestock, possessions and servants, and 'took' (*zaiasha*) the Pechenegs and Torks along with their camps. Ip.Let., AM 6624 (1116), col. 284: after two days of fighting on the Don with the Cumans, the Pechenegs and Torks, the last two ethne, came to Vladimir's Rus'. Eventually, however, they left after the Berendeis were driven away: Ip.Let., AM 6629 (1121), col. 286.

147 Rasovskii 1933, 19. Cf. Kniaz'kii 2003, 77–78.

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and strongest of the ethnic groups that jointly attacked Byzantium in 1121 and 1122.[148] John Komnenos' victory meant that some of these aggressors were pacified and settled within the Empire, but some probably retreated to the north. This is evidenced by information contained in the *Chronicon Vindobonense*, according to which, late in the reign of the Hungarian King Stephen II (circa 1124), a certain chief (*dux*) Tartar appeared in the region. He led a group of Cumans (*Kuni*), who after suffering defeat at the hands of an unspecified emperor, took refuge in Hungary.[149] It seems that the only emperor capable of defeating the Cumans in the early 1120s was John II Komnenos, and that defeat was the Battle of Beroia.[150]

The 'Scythians' with whom Byzantium was involved in a war in 1121 and 1122 were not, therefore, a single ethnos, but a coalition composed of the Cumans and other steppe groups, probably including the Pechenegs, Uzes and Berendei. The mix of ethnicities in this group may explain the use of an archaic umbrella ethnonym.[151] For Byzantine authors, the nomads were just various incarnations of a single people, well-known from classical literature. It was thus possible to use the archaic name 'Scythians' for each individual steppe ethnos, as well as for a confederation or even a temporary alliance of several ethnic groups. The ethnically diverse nature of the invaders also seems to be indicated by the wording used by Theodore Prodromos, who referred to a 'gathering of Getae' and the 'Scythian Chimera'.

148 Cf. Diaconu 1978, 62–71; Stephenson 2000, 106. Both researchers are certain that the invaders in 1121–1122 were Cumans.

149 Chr.Hung., 444–445; Joh.Thur., § 440 (p. 128). Cf. Vásáry 2005, 11 (note 38).

150 A distant echo of the Battle of Beroia is the story of the expedition of King *Kirjalax* (probably John II Komnenos) against *Blokummanaland* (Wallachia?) described in *Heimskringla* by Snorri Sturluson. In the area Snorri calls the Pecheneg Plains (*Pezinovöllu*), there was a battle involving the blind pagan king. Despite these mysterious names for the people and locations, much seems to indicate that this is probably a description of the Battle of Beroia. This is evidenced by Sturlusson's information about the course of the battle, which in its basic points corresponds to the accounts presented by John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates. Similarly to the way it was described by the Greek historian, the pagans were supposed to surround themselves with a wall of wagons, and the victory of John's Varangian guards secured the victory for the Christians. Snorri also gives the name of the Scandinavian commander, Thórir Helsing. He claims that the attack by the emperor's personal guard was preceded by two unsuccessful attacks, the first by Greek troops and the second by Franco-Flemish units. Snorri, 787–788. Cf. Diaconu 1978, 72–77.

151 Michael Attaleiates probably did likewise when he described the expeditions of Roman Diogenes against the Seljuks. The author, who took part in those expeditions, mentions some 'Scythians' who were then a part of the emperor's army. These were most likely Uzes and Pechenegs, a fact of which Attaleiates was perfectly aware, though he still used an archaic umbrella ethnonym. See the above argument contained in the section 'Feigned Loyalty'.

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A separate, very interesting question is the reason why the name of the Pechenegs was mentioned in the narration of Niketas Choniates. It is worth noting that the author uses it only in the final fragment of the story about the war of 1121 and 1122. The ethnonym was given as the name of the festival established by John II Komnenos, which clearly indicates that its use was intended by the monarch. Why, then, when establishing a festival in honour of a victory over a coalition of nomadic peoples, did he distinguish one of them in particular, and why one that most likely did not play a major role in it? It seems that we are dealing here with a conscious process of building the dynastic ideology of the Komnenoi by the Emperor. Members of this family line from Asia Minor, who managed to attain imperial power, are connected by their successes in battle with the Pechenegs. Isaac Komnenos brought them to heel and imposed on them his formal authority in 1059. His nephew, Alexios Komnenos, achieved a much more spectacular victory by practically destroying the Pechenegs at Lebounion. Later, in 1094, he also crushed the Cumans and restored the Empire's control over Paristrion, taking back the border on the lower Danube.[152] John II, through the establishment of the 'festival of the Pechenegs', revalorized the victories of the older members of the Komnenos family, and pointed out that his triumph referred also to their successes, making the Emperor the true heir of the dynasty.[153] The distinction of this particular ethnos was therefore not due to its special role in the events of 1121 and 1122. It was rather a kind of reference to the collective memory of the Byzantines, whose memory of exhausting struggles with the Pechenegs from 30 years ago was still vivid. Their invasions of the Empire's Balkan provinces created in the minds of the citizens of Byzantium, the image of a Pecheneg as the personification of all threats originating in the north,[154] even though they were not the only people who plundered the provinces. The victory of Alexios Komnenos and the subsequent restoration of the Danube border seemed to put an end to the dangers coming from beyond it. The triumph of John Komnenos reminded everyone about old threats, but at the same time, it effectively eliminated them. The establishment of the 'festival of the Pechenegs' in all likelihood served to strengthen the image of the Komnenos dynasty as effective defenders of the Empire's borders.[155]

152 Diaconu 1978, 41–58; Stephenson 2000, 103–105.

153 In the aforementioned epitaph, Theodore Prodromos presents the figure of Alexios Komnenos, the persecutor (διώκτης) of the Celts, Scythians and Persians. Prodromos, XXV 9–11 (p. 336).

154 Cf. Stephenson 2000, 106.

155 The epitaph of John Komnenos also contains a depiction of the lower Danube (Ister), and notes the Danube was navigable for imperial ships. The river was therefore not only a border, but also an area controlled by the ruler. Prodromos, XXV 41–42 (p. 337).

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7.2 The Pechenegs in the Arpadian Kingdom

The early relations between the Hungarians and Pechenegs were full of drama, with Magyar tribes being forced twice to leave their homes because of Pecheneg attacks.[156] These conflicts, however, are poorly reflected in Hungarian sources. The only trace of them seems to be a legend written down in Hungarian chronicles that describes countless ravenous eagles devouring the cattle and horses of the Magyars after they crossed the Carpathians in their quest for a new homeland. Since the Old Turkic term for an eagle (*becse*) is very similar to the ethnonym used in Hungarian medieval sources to describe the Pechenegs (*Bessi*, *Bisseni*), it is sometimes assumed that the aforementioned legend is a distant reminiscence of battles fought between the two ethne in the late 9th century.[157] The memory of the defeat suffered at that time and the fear of its perpetrators must have survived for some time among the Hungarians, but it did not result in eternal hostility, as evidenced by a joint raid on Byzantium that took place in 934.[158] Hungarian sources, moreover, confirm that the Pechenegs settled in Arpadian Hungary relatively early. In the third quarter of the 10th century, during the reign of Prince Taksony (d. 972), 'a knight from a ducal family' known as Thonuzoba is said to have come from 'the Pecheneg lands'. The ruler ordered him to settle in Kemey, on the left bank of the middle Tisza, in the place where the port of Obad was later built.[159] Thonuzoba most probably did not come alone, but the long-standing claim put forward by Hungarian historiography that he brought with him one of the Pecheneg tribes[160] is unsubstantiated. In all probability, this group of refugees was not numerous. Moreover, this migration was relatively early, so the main Pecheneg settlements on the Black Sea steppe were not yet at risk. This leads us to believe no major influx of immigrants occurred at that time.

In the 10th century, relations between the Hungarians and Pechenegs were relatively good. We have no information about armed conflicts being provoked

156 Cf. Chapter 3 of the present book.

157 Chr.Hung. 286; Joh.Thur., § 203 (p. 60). Cf. Kristó 1996, 191.

158 Cf. Chapter 5 of the present book.

159 G.Ung., 116: Et in eodem tempore de terra Byssenorum venit quidam miles de ducali progenie, cuius nomen fuit Thonuzoba […].

160 Fehér 1921–25, 136–139. Fehér assumes that the arrival of Thonuzoba was connected with the migration of one of the eastern tribes of the Pechenegs (Τζοπόν/*Čaba), which left its settlements as early as in the 940s due to the threat posed by the Uzes and their raids. Aside from the fact that Fehér based his research on a number of assumptions which are difficult to prove, it should be noted that the dating of the threat posed by the Uzes, which supposedly caused the aforementioned migration, is much too early. Cf. Rasovskii, 5–7; Györffy 1990, 158, 187; 1971, 200; Göckenjan 1972, 96.

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by either party. The next century brought about a change, though not an especially radical one. As we have seen, the military activity of the Pechenegs on territories neighbouring the western fringe of the Black Sea steppe resulted from the fact that these nomads were gradually being forced out of lands east of the Dnieper.[161] Apart from Byzantium, Transylvania may also have fallen prey to their raids. In *The Life of Saint Stephen*, there is mention of a Pecheneg raid that reached the vicinity of Alba Iulia (Alba Transsilvana).[162] It is difficult to determine precisely when this raid took place. The nature of the sources which mention it makes it even harder to answer this question. One cannot help thinking that the authors of *The Life of Saint Stephen* referred to this event only to prove that Providence was taking special care of their devout ruler and his subjects. According to the story, King Stephen was warned in his sleep against an attack by the Pechenegs, who were approaching his land to loot the homes of his Christians subjects. He immediately sent to Transylvania a messenger who ordered the local people to seek shelter within the fortifications of Alba Iulia. We can assume that this raid, given that it was an actual historical event, took place during the long reign of Stephen I (997–1038). Any more specific dating would merely be speculation. György Györffy assumes the Pecheneg raid took place between 1015 and 1017 and had political undertones related to the rivalry between Poland and Hungary. Györffy suggests that supporters of Bolesław I the Brave used the Grand Prince of Rus' Sviatopolk as an intermediary to persuade the Pechenegs to attack the lands ruled by Stephen I.[163] It is hard to confirm this hypothesis. Relations between Bolesław I the Brave and the Pechenegs, as we saw in the previous chapter, were not very friendly. Györffy also assumes that the nomad raid must have been inspired by some foreign power. This is a very stereotypical interpretation based on the notion that the nomads' only motivation was the desire to obtain rich booty, and that they were incapable of taking military action on their own. However, in this case, the reason for the Pecheneg raid was clearly looting, as noted in *The Life of Saint Stephen*. Therefore, there is no need to search for additional inspiration in the desires of outside forces to achieve their own goals. Romanian researchers, on the other hand, assume that the nomads raided Transylvania in 1028.[164] This later date seems to be more convincingly linked with the increased activity

161 Cf. Chapter 6 of the present book.

162 Leg.St., 389, 423.

163 Györffy 1988, 169; 2003, 342; Zsoldos 2004, 126; Bárány 2012, 336.

164 Spinei 2009, 107. Spinei cites the chronicle of Heinrich von Mügeln, which mentions a raid by some Huns (Hewnen) who in 1028 invaded the country of the Bessers (this probably refers to the Pechenegs). Chr.Müg., 109–111. Despite its interesting chronology, this mention has nothing to do with the data in *The Life of Saint Stephen*.

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of the Pechenegs on the Lower Danube and in Moldavia, which indeed began in the second quarter of the 11th century. However, in this case as well, we are dealing with a hypothesis that is very difficult to verify.

Due to the turbulent events of the mid-11th century, most importantly the migration of the bulk of the Pechenegs to the Balkans, Arpadian Hungary no longer had to cope with looting raids organized by the Pechenegs. Some researchers assume that exactly 30 years after the death of Stephen I, i.e., during the reign of King Solomon (1063–1074), these raids started anew. This was when some nomadic group broke through border fortifications (*indagines*) in the vicinity of the upper Meszes, devastated the whole of the Nyír province, reaching as far as Bihar, a fortified city beyond the province's borders. The raiders collected a significant booty, namely, a great number of male and female captives, as well as cattle. During their return, they were cut off by an army commanded by King Solomon himself, accompanied by two princes, Ladislaus and Géza. The main battle took place by Kerlés Mountain, located in Transylvania, west of the city of Bistriţa.[165] The battle ended in a decisive victory for the Hungarians.

Many researchers believe the Pechenegs were behind this raid.[166] However, this interpretation raises doubts. Most importantly, it needs to be noted that Hungarian written sources are not unanimous in their verdict. Simon of Kéza, who mentioned events related to the Battle of Kerlés in his chronicle, regarded the opponents of the Hungarians to be the Pechenegs (*Bessi*), but his information about these events raises skepticism. This is in part because the chronicler dated the battle incorrectly and claimed it took place during the independent reign of King Ladislaus I (1077–1095).[167]

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165 Near the east border of the former Szolnok-Doboka county. Cf. Göckenjan 1972, 97.

166 Györffy 1990a, 210–211; Göckenjan 1972, 97, 187 (note 90); Makk 1999, 63; Spinei 2003, 130; 2009, 117–118; Curta 2006, 306; Meško 2013, 187; Berend, Urbańczyk, Wiszewski 2013, 232. Spinei cautiously takes the view that it was the Pechenegs who were behind the raid of 1068, but at the same time, cites a very interesting remark by a chronicler from west Rus', according to whom the Cumans and the Vlachs had organized a raid on Hungary which was repelled by Solomon and Géza. Moreover, the source explained that the Cumans were also called Polovtsy and Kum. The chronicler wrongly dated this incursion to 1059. Russ.khr., 241.

167 Sim.Kéza, 182. It seems worth reflecting on the fact that the chronicler knew nothing about the Pecheneg raid of 1071, which was provoked by the duke of Belgrade. As we can recall, it was Solomon and both princes of the blood who headed the retaliatory action that led to capturing the Byzantine fortress. This gives grounds to the suspicion that Simon of Kéza merged the two raids and turned them into one event, which he dated to the reign of Ladislaus I. It seems that some medieval Hungarian authors took a dislike to Solomon, which could also explain the chronological shift made by the chronicler. Lastly, we need to note that in Hungarian sources, King Ladislaus appears as the slayer of all sorts

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Much more detailed information can be found in *Hungarian Fourteenth-century Chronicle Composition*, according to which the raid of 1068 was organized by a ethnos called the *Cuni*.[168] It should be emphasized here that this ethnonym does not appear anywhere in the work of Simon of Kéza.[169] This brings to mind strong connotations with the Cumans. Nevertheless, this identification is challenged by contemporary scholarship. It is usually pointed out that in the Hungarian chronicles, the Latin term *Cunus* meant "somebody coming from the east, a horse rider, a nomad".[170] In this case, it would have been a *nomen collectivum* whose range of meaning resembled *Scythian*, a category known from the Byzantine literary tradition. Until the mid-12th century, when *Cunus* was replaced by *Comanus*, this ethnic name could have referred to any nomadic tribe which bordered Arpadian Hungary to the east. However, even though the above interpretation does extend the scope of identification, it does not rule out the possibility of identifying *Cuni* with Cumans in this particular case. The Cumans had dominated the Black Sea steppe since the 1060s, so they could have organized the raid on Hungary in 1068. It also needs to be noted that the *Chronicle Composition*, which describes two subsequent barbarian raids in 1068 and 1071, has its roots in the chronicling tradition which clearly distinguishes *Cuni* from *Bisseni*, i.e., the Pechenegs. According to this source, the latter raided Hungary three years after the *Cuni*.

Identifying the raiders of 1068 with the Pechenegs gives rise to other doubts unrelated to the quality of available sources. This includes the fact that this raid must have been organized by a very strong group living on the Black Sea steppe. The raiders first crossed the east Carpathians, then invaded Transylvania, engaging a large Hungarian force commanded by the King himself. These facts force us to consider the hypothesis that more than two decades after the migration led by Tyrach and four years after the wave of Uze migration, there still lived a very strong group of the Pechenegs in the western part of the Black

of nomads, which also gives grounds for an assumption that Solomon's successes were attributed to him because he had fought by his side.

168 Chr.Hun., 366–369; cf. Jo.Thur., § 335–341 (pp. 98–100).

169 This silence seems telling, especially if we take into account the fact that Chronica Hungarorum mentions three such raids which took place in the 11th century, in 1068, 1083, and 1091. Chr.Hun. 366–369, 408–409, 412–414; cf. Jo.Thur., § 335–341 (pp. 98–100), § 395–396 (p. 115), § 400–403 (pp. 116–117). This state of affairs gives rise to an assumption that Simon of Kéza, chaplain of Ladislaus the Cuman (1272–1290), could have purposely left out information which would have shed a bad light on those who were close to the ruler or on influential Cuman settlers, who were numerous in Hungary.

170 Macartney 1940, 141 (note 1); Györffy 1990a, 215–216; Berend 2001, 190–191. Cf. Németh 1941–43, 95–107. The last researcher believes that the ethnonyms *quman* and *qūn* are synonymous and explains their meaning as 'fawn-coloured, yellow'.

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Sea steppe. They organized looting raids on Hungary, which seems to prove that their settlements on the steppe were not under any threat; otherwise in 1068 they would have tried to settle in Hungary, not just plunder it. However, this scenario seems rather improbable. Though it is indeed possible that long after Tyrach led the migration to the Balkans, small groups of the Pechenegs, either subordinate to the Cumans or part of some sort of ethnic conglomerate, lived between the steppe and the neighbouring countries. This is indicated by the events related to the Battle of Beroia discussed earlier. Yet such groups could not have organized a raid like the one in 1068 on their own. It therefore seems that this should be regarded as the first Cuman raid on Hungary.

The events of 1071 are a different story. The direction of the raid (the southern counties of Arpadian Hungary were attacked), as well as the indirect involvement of the Byzantine duke of Belgrade seem to suggest that it was indeed the Pechenegs, who had been living in the Byzantine Balkans for 25 years, who were behind the raid. The attack and the resultant retaliatory action taken by King Solomon were probably the last clashes between the Pechenegs and Hungarians noted by historical sources.

However, some researchers hold a different opinion. They point to the events of the 1080s, when the Cuman chief (*dux Cunorum*) Kutesk, allied with the deposed King Solomon, invaded Hungary.[171] These events should be dated to 1084–1086. After some initial successes, the attackers were defeated by King Ladislaus I, who also recovered the booty they had taken, and Solomon and Kutesk were forced to flee. Based on a broad interpretation of the ethnonym *Cuni*, it is assumed that among the allies of the victorious king were the Pechenegs.[172] However, the grounds for this identification are even weaker than in the case of the raid of 1068. There is no source that could connect the military expedition organized by Solomon and Kutesk with the Pechenegs, not even in some distorted form. Meanwhile, in the *Chronicle Composition* we can find an account of the expedition to the Balkans in spring 1087, also described by Anna Komnena. The Hungarian literary tradition confirms the participation of Solomon and his allies the *Cuni*.[173]

Relations between the Pechenegs and Arpadian Hungary did not manifest themselves solely in armed conflicts. It would be hard to consider the plundering raids on Hungary organized by the Pechenegs to have been extremely bothersome since, as we have seen, only two such raids are confirmed to have taken

171 Chr.Hung., 408–409; Jo.Thur., § 395–396 (p. 115).

172 Makk 1999, 77; Meško 2013, 195; Berend, Urbańczyk, Wiszewski 2013, 233.

173 Chr.Hung., 409–410; Jo.Thur., § 395 (p. 115).

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place in the 11th century. Another equally important aspect of the relations between the two nations was Pecheneg settlement in Arpadian Hungary. The aforementioned Thonuzoba most likely led one of the first groups of Pechenegs to leave the steppe and find safe haven in Hungary. This phenomenon intensified in the 11th century. The Hungarian literary tradition dates a very intensive process of immigration, involving numerous European peoples, to the reigns of Géza (972–997) and Stephen I (997–1038).[174] The Pechenegs (*Bessi*) are listed among the peoples who settled on the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary. This story, at least in part, appears to be an anachronism, but in this case it may speak to a truth. During the reign of Stephen I, some Pechenegs may have sought shelter in Hungary after the defeats suffered in battles with the Uzes and the Rus'. This process could even have intensified in the first decades of the 11th century. This migration most likely ended by the mid-12th century. It cannot be ruled out that the last Pechenegs arrived in Hungary with the Cumans led by Tatar.[175]

The first Arpads readily welcomed immigrants from foreign ethnic groups. *Libellus de institutione morum* [A Manual on Moral Formation], attributed to King Stephen I, includes the proclamation of an open 'immigration policy'. In the text, the ruler instructed his son that guests (*hospites*), namely new settlers, should be supported and treated with respect to make them more willing to settle in the Arpadian Kingdom, as incomers from different lands brought with them various traditions and skills, which strengthened the country.[176] Even if these statements were not actually formulated by Stephen I himself, it seems that they accurately illustrate the approach towards immigrants adopted by this ruler and by the Arpad dynasty as a whole. Newcomers were treated as a source of strength for the Hungarian monarchy; by offering safe haven to refugees, Hungarian rulers benefited from this foreign element, which was fully under their control and whose members provided their services in the economy and on the battlefield.

In all probability, the Pechenegs also benefitted from this policy. Their migration to Hungary was actually a gradual influx of relatively small groups over a long, nearly 200-year period. Therefore, it was relatively easy to achieve their full political subordination and social integration. Apart from the Pechenegs' acting against King Solomon by supporting Prince Géza, a pretender to the throne, there is no information indicating any other attempts made to revolt

174 Chr.Hung. Cf. Berend 2001, 104.
175 Cf. above.
176 Libellus, 624–625. Cf. Berend 2001, 40.

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against the monarch.[177] This fact seems to prove that the Arpads' policy was successful.

It is difficult to determine the number of the Pechenegs living in Hungary. Onomastic data seems to suggest that prior to the arrival of the Cumans, the Pechenegs may have been the most numerous group of settlers of foreign ethnicity.[178] However, the nature of our sources calls for caution. Apart from the name of the given settlement associated with the Pechenegs, we often know nothing else about this place, its population, or it inhabitants. Moreover, the diplomatic sources from the 13th and 14th centuries that provide the onomastic material available to us sometimes indicate that during the drafting of these documents, the settlements mentioned were abandoned.[179] Finally, we should bear in mind that while toponyms related to the Pechenegs are relatively numerous, there is no analogous data from Hungary concerning the Uzes-Torks. The fact that a major migration of Uzes-Torks to the Arpadian Kingdom very likely began in the latter half of the 11th century, and may have converged with a migration of the Pechenegs, gives us grounds to assume that the Pechenegs were over-represented in onomastic materials at the expense of the Uzes.

Pecheneg settlements were scattered over large sections of the Kingdom of Hungary, but were centred in its western and central parts. Along Hungary's western frontier, Pecheneg settlements are confirmed to have existed on the Leitha, south and east of Lake Neusiedl (Neusiedler See/Fertő), and along the lower and middle Rába (the counties [*comitatus*] of Moson, Sopron, Raab-Györ, Vas, Veszprém and Zala).[180] In terms the north-west border region, Pecheneg settlements were located mostly in what is today Slovakia. We can find them north of Esztergom, and on the upper Sikenica (a tributary of the Hron), the upper Hron, the lower Žitava, the upper Nitra, and the middle Váh (in the counties of Hont, Bars, Komárom, Nitra, and Trenčín).[181] The sites of six or seven Pecheneg villages have been confirmed on Žitný Ostrov (Csállóköz, or Great Rye Island) on the Danube (Bratislava/Pozsony county).[182] There were

177 Cf. below.

178 Göckenjan 1972, 237–238. Göckenjan devised a list of places related to the nomadic peoples coming from the east, and it turned out that Pecheneg toponyms were the most numerous.

179 Göckenjan 1972, 100, 101, 109; Oţa, 2014, 33.

180 Rasovskii 1933, 20–24 (however, this researcher's identifications raise doubts because he often considers as Pecheneg the settlements inhabited by archers (*sagitarii*) whose ethnicity is undetermined in the sources); Györffy 1990, 124–129; Göckenjan 1972, 99–102.

181 Rasovskii 1933, 25–26; Györffy 1990, 156–158; Göckenjan 1972, 111–112; Marek 2003, 196–202, 204–206.

182 Rasovskii 1933, 26–27; Györffy 1990, 155–156; Göckenjan 1972, 112–113; Marek 2003, 202–204.

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also Pecheneg settlements in the northern border region of the Kingdom of Hungary by the river Sajó and its tributary, the Bodva (Borsod county).[183] In Transylvania, major Pecheneg settlements were located near those of other ethnic groups, forming a defensive buffer on the eastern border of the Arpadian Kingdom. The Pechenegs also lived alongside Vlachs and Székelys in an area called *Silva Blacorum et Bissenorum* in the Middle Ages, located in the Cód/Zoodt river valley.[184] Pecheneg villages were likewise located west of Maros Vásárhely/Târgu Mures and west of Gyulafejérvár/Alba Iulia (south-eastern part of Bihar county, and the counties of Haromszék, Nagyküküllö, Csik and Kézdiszék).[185] Finally, in the Kingdom of Hungary's southern border region, it has been confirmed that Pechenegs settled in the area between the middle and lower Drava and the Danube, as well as between the Danube and the lower Sava (counties of Somogy, Bács, Bodrog, Baranya, and Valkó).[186] It cannot be ruled out that some settlements located in the area of Syrmia/Szerém/Sremska Mitrovica could have been inhabited by the Pechenegs who until 1181 served as Byzantine border guards. After this area was conquered by Béla III, they entered the service of the King of Hungary.[187]

Dense Pecheneg settlement is also confirmed in areas located far from Hungary's borders. We find these settlements by the Sárvíz River (in southern Fejér county and northern Tolna county),[188] by the Tisza and its middle tributaries (the counties of Heves, Borsod, and Bihar),[189] and finally between the Tisza and the Danube (the counties of Pilis and Pest).[190] According to diplomatic sources, there were 34 settlements on the Sárvíz River, making it the largest concentration of Pecheneg settlements in all of Hungary.[191]

We can assume that the Pecheneg settlers in the Arpadian Kingdom were mainly engaged in military service. The location of their settlements seems to indicate that they served in the guard units defending border areas. Some also defended the roads leading to the border used by the military. Another duty of the Pechenegs was to provide contingents of light cavalry armed with bows.[192]

183 Rasovskii 1933, 27–28; Györffy 1990, 159–160; Göckenjan 1972, 109.
184 Györffy 1990, 165–166; Göckenjan 1972, 106.
185 Rasovskii 1933, 30; Györffy 1990, 166–167; Göckenjan 1972, 106–107.
186 Rasovskii 1933, 31–32; Györffy 1990, 129–135, 152–153; Göckenjan 1972, 102–105.
187 Rasovskii 1933, 31; Göckenjan 1972, 104.
188 Rasovskii 1933, 39; Györffy 1990, 136–152; Göckenjan 1972, 105; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 32.
189 Rasovskii 1933, 40; Györffy 1990, 158–159; Göckenjan 1972, 107–109; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 32.
190 Györffy 1990, 153–154; Göckenjan 1972, 105–106.
191 Györffy 1971, 200; Göckenjan 1972, 105; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 36; Hatházi 1992–1995, 223–243.
192 Rasovskii 1933, 44; Göckenjan 1972, 113–114.

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The role of the former nomads who settled in the country's interior must have differed somewhat. It is assumed that their dense settlement in the area of the Sárvíz and Lake Balaton resulted from their role in defending Fehérvár, an early royal residence of the Arpad dynasty.[193] The Pechenegs from this area also provided cavalry contingents to support military expeditions organized by Hungarian rulers. According to estimates made by Hansgerd Göckenjan, nomads from the counties of Fejér and Tolna were capable of equipping 400 to 600 mounted archers, 2/3 of which (200–300 riders) took part in expeditions led by Hungarian monarchs.[194] Apart from their customary military duties, the Pechenegs who lived on the middle Tisza were also said to breed horses for the army.[195] Another task that some Pechenegs performed in Hungary was collecting duty for the Hungarian rulers and controlling sailing on the Danube.[196]

The first instances when Pechenegs fought for Arpad monarchs are believed to have happened in the late 10th century. In 997, they supposedly reinforced the troops of Stephen I while he was fighting to put down an insurrection of Koppány.[197] Their participation in efforts to repel the invasion of Emperor Henry III (in 1051) is much better substantiated.[198] In addition, they served in the army of Stephen II when he fought against Ladislaus, Duke of Bohemia (in 1116).[199] They could also be found in the army of Géza II (1141–1162) during his conflict with Henry, Duke of Austria (in 1146), when they fought in the vanguard, suffering significant loses and losing two of their commanders (*comites*).[200] Géza II used the Pechenegs as expedition troops sent beyond the borders of the kingdom. In 1150, the Pechenegs also supported the Serbian revolt against Byzantium.[201]

The Pechenegs usually acted as scouts in the military expeditions of Hungarian rulers, and were skilled in guerrilla warfare. In pitched battles they were less effective in combat. Hungarian chroniclers complained constantly about their cowardice,[202] but these complaints are probably unjustified. In

193 Rasovskii 1933, 39.

194 Göckenjan 1972, 105, 190 (note 176). Göckenjan relies on estimates concerning the Székelys made by György Györffy.

195 Göckenjan 1972, 110.

196 Göckenjan 1972, 105–106, 112–113.

197 Györffy 1971, 209; 1988, 100.

198 Chr.Hung., 348–349; Jo.Thur., § 310–311 (p. 91). Cf. Rasovskii 21, 44; Göckenjan 1972, 98.

199 Chr.Hung., 436; Jo.Thur., § 430 (p. 125). Cf. Rasovskii, 44–45; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 30.

200 Chr.Hung., 456; Jo.Thur., § 454 (p. 132); Ott.Fr.-Rah., I 33 (p. 52). Cf. Rasovskii 1933, 45; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 30–31.

201 Io.Cinn., III 8 (p. 107); Brand 1976, 86. Cf. Rasovskii 1933, 45.

202 Chr.Hung., 436; Jo.Thur., § 430 (p. 125): Bisseni atque Syculi vilissimi usque ad castrum regis absque vulnere fugierunt. Chr.Hung., 456; Jo.Thur., § 454 (p. 132). Bisseni vero

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direct confrontations with heavily-armed formations, light cavalry was generally ineffective, so after firing upon the enemy, the Pechenegs usually pulled back. Moreover, as has been noted, there is no evidence of any disloyalty toward the Arpad dynasty by the Pechenegs. In this respect, their behaviour contrasts with that of their fellow tribesmen who settled on the territory of the Byzantine Empire. Their siding with Géza I in his conflict with Solomon (in 1074), even though this clearly meant acting against the reigning monarch, was in fact a choice to choose one side in a dynastic dispute. The stance taken by the nomads here was probably no different than the position adopted by many other subjects of the Arpads. Like other supporters of the pretender, the Pechenegs hoped to be granted certain privileges. For this reason, they swore to put an end to Solomon's raids and prevent carrying them out beyond Moson and Pozsony counties. However, they could not keep this promise. They were defeated and many of them drowned in Lake Neusiedl, while others, including their leader Zultan, managed to flee.[203]

These events bring to mind the question of the legal status of the Pechenegs in Hungary. The nature of their migration to the territory of the Arpadian Kingdom seems to rule out the existence of some unified organization the nomads together, which means it was impossible for all newcomers to be granted the same rights. Unlike the influx of the Cumans,[204] usually dated to 1239, the Pechenegs did not enter the Hungarian territory in one large group, but rather in many small groups, which meant that each one may have been settled under different conditions. Apart from the Pechenegs who voluntarily moved to lands belonging to Hungary and began to serve its rulers, there may have also been some Pecheneg captives who were settled against their will. It had been proven that in the counties of Pest and Pilis there were Pecheneg villages whose inhabitants grew wine grapes. This circumstance suggests that they may have been the descendants of captives who were among the group of serfs obliged to perform specific services to the court.[205] Their status was most probably different than that of the nomadic groups which offered their military skills to the monarch upon their arrival in Hungary. This type of service meant that they had strong ties with the ruler, who took care of them and granted them separate rights in exchange for fulfilling military duties. It is usually assumed that the Pechenegs who settled in the basin of the Sárvíz

pessimi et Siculi vilissimi omnes pariter fugierunt sicut oves a lupis, qui more solito preibant agmina Hungarorum.

203 Chr.Hung., 395–396; Jo.Thur., § 378–379 (p. 110). Cf. Rasovskii 1933, 44.

204 Cf. Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 47–50; Berend 2001, 68–73, 87–93, 2001a, 103–104.

205 Göckenjan 1972, 105.

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(in Fejér and Tolna counties) formed a community which enjoyed significant autonomy. Its members held periodical meetings headed by a *comes*, a descendent of Pecheneg steppe-dwellers. This independence continued until the 14th century, when during the reign of Louis I (1342–1382), the local Pecheneg elites became part of the nobility, though they remained under the judicial jurisdiction of the župan of Fejér.[206]

Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that all groups of military settlers enjoyed a similar level of independence. This seems to be indicated by the unfulfilled aspirations of the Pechenegs led by Zultan. For immigrants from the steppe, military service to crown was a guarantee of personal freedom and a special legal status, but with time, as the social integration of successive generations of the Pechenegs progressed, their community became less cohesive. The descendants of the elites and those of common nomads went their separate ways. The first became noblemen, whereas the latter loss their special status and became ordinary subjects.[207]

The social integration of the Pechenegs in the Hungarian Kingdom must have been accompanied by cultural assimilation. However, this process was not uniform. Acculturation was most certainly faster in the case of nomads who settled in areas where the natural conditions differed significantly from those of the steppe and those who were entrusted with tasks that had little in common with their former lifestyle. The Pechenegs from the counties of Pest and Pilis, for example, were bound to the land and most likely quickly broke with their old traditions. Likewise, regardless of the activities carried out by the new settlers, cultural change was much more rapid in the upland and mountainous areas of Transylvania and Slovakia than on the vast plains of Alföld, which in many ways resembled the steppe. Yet rapid cultural assimilation was not always in the interest of the Hungarian rulers, who knew it would result in a loss of fighting skills and a decline in some forms of economic activity (such as herding), the very reasons why the Arpads had readily welcomed the Pecheneg *hospites* and why they continued to value their presence.

Cultural change was accelerated due to strong pressures to Christianize the nomads, especially during and after the reign of Stephen I. One of its victims was said to have been Thonuzoba. He refused to be baptized, so the Hungarian ruler ordered that he and his wife be buried alive.[208] Even though the credibility of this story is sometimes questioned, it is a very good illustration of the extremely harsh, not to say cruel evangelization methods practised by

206 Györffy 1990, 136–152; 1971, 200; Göckenjan 1972, 105; Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 33; Berend, Urbańczyk, Wiszewski 2013, 471.

207 Pálóczi-Horváth 1972, 33; Oţa, 2014, 43–44.

208 G.Ung., 116–117. Urkund, the son of Thonuzoba, was baptized.

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King Stephen.[209] The fate of Thonuzoba most probably reflects the choice that many representatives of the Pecheneg elites faced at that time, especially those close to the royal court. Christianization, a process which by its very nature was extremely slow and extended over several generations, surely did not mean that old traditions were immediately and completely rejected. However, because the Arpad rulers were strongly involved in conversion efforts and vigorously supported the Hungarian church, Christianization was most probably one of the main tools used to assimilate and integrate the Pechenegs. Their native religious practices did not survive the 11th century.[210] Sources dating back to the 13th century no longer present the Pechenegs as pagans, whereas in the Late Middle Ages we find cases of strong relations between persons of Pecheneg descent and the Hungarian church.[211]

The descendants of Pechenegs who were fully integrated both socially and culturally were appointed to the highest state positions in Hungary. For instance, Magnificus Paulus Byssenus de Eorghede served as the *Ban* of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slovenia in the years 1404–1406.[212] However, the price for such a spectacular career was a complete break with one's former steppe traditions, of which a feint reminder were ethnic accents in official titles.

7.3 The Pechenegs in Rus'

Evidence for the Pechenegs' presence in the lands ruled by the Rurik dynasty can be found in chronicles as well as through onomastic research, although the latter is based on rather sparse material when compared to that of Hungary. As we have already seen, starting from the latter half of the 11th century, Rus' chroniclers usually mentioned the Pechenegs along with two other steppe groups, the Torks and the Berendei. In 1146, the chronicles provide the first account of the so-called Cherni Klobuci,[213] a community of steppe-dwellers from southern Rus' who lived mainly in the principalities of Kiev and Pereiaslavl.[214] Without a doubt this community was comprised not only of the Torks, Berendei and several smaller nomadic groups of Turkic origin, but also

209 Berend, Laszlovszky, Szakács 2007, 333–335, 344–346; Berend 2013, 261–269.

210 Pálóczi-Horváth 1989, 38; Berend 2001, 56.

211 In 1373, castellan Johannes Beseny de Nezda obtained permission to build a monastery. Cf. Györffy 1990, 134; Berend 2001, 56–57.

212 Rasovskii 1933, 50.

213 Ip.Let., col. 323.

214 For more on the Cherni Klobuci: Rasovskii 1927, 93–109; 1933, 1–66; 1940, 369–378; Pletneva 1973; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985; Golden 1996, 97–107; Kijas 2007, 145–156; Morgunov 2010, 62–75.

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of Pechenegs.[215] It is not entirely clear how this community was organized. The name 'Cherni Kolobuci' translates as 'black hats' and refers to the pointed, cone-shaped headgear worn by them. The adjective 'black', however, may indicate the subservient and subordinate, or even slave-like status of the Cherni Klobuci.[216] Each group belonging to the Cherni Klobuci had its own leader and, as can be seen from archeological materials and written sources, some form of social stratification.[217] Notwithstanding these facts, they were initially subordinated entirely to the Rus' princes' authority and did not have the right to carry out their own armed expeditions.[218] The Cherni Klobuci's obligations were limited to military service, which consisted in protecting the borders of Rus', and providing contingents of cavalry during armed expeditions.[219]

The political break-up of Rus', and especially the struggle for control of Kiev, provided a road to emancipation for the steppe-dwellers. As a prized and relatively numerous military force,[220] the Cherni Klobuci constituted which they leveraged to gain advantageous concessions and privileges while offering in return to support individual pretenders to the Kievan throne. D. Rasovskii noted that they usually supported those Rurikids who descended from the elder sons of Vladimir Monomakh (d. 1125) and ruled the Rus' principalities located on the right bank of the Dnieper River. This was motivated by the Cherni Klobuci's animosity towards the Cumans who provided military assistance to the rulers of the left-bank principalities, i.e. Chernigov and Suzdal. In the second half of the 12th century, however, the Cherni Klobuci groups were so prominent that each Rus' prince had to have a somewhat stable relation with them in order to preserve his authority in Kiev.[221] Their elites enjoyed a special position, especially the khans of the Cherni Klobuci who were often known by name. The fact that they were entrusted with the management of the strongholds inhabited not only by Turkic but also by Slavic people proves that they had considerable leverage.[222] The relations between those two ethnic

215 This is clearly indicated by entries in the Hypatian chronicle: Ip.Let., AM 6659 (1151), col. 427–428; AM 6670 (1162), col. 517; AM 6677 (1169), col. 533. Cf. Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 38–41, 67; Golden 1996, 101–104; Morgunov 2010, 72.

216 Rasovskii 1933, 16 (note 85); Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 67–68; Golden 1996, 104–107.

217 The Hypatian chronicle (Ip.Let., AM 6688 (1180), col. 622) mentions the 'better' Cherni Klobuci. Cf. Pletneva 1973, 12–17.

218 Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 77.

219 Rasovskii 1927, 93–99; 1933, 57–58.

220 Dimitri Rasovskii estimated the number of the Cherni Klobuci, together with their families, at around 100,000 (1933, 58).

221 Rasovskii 1927, 99–102; 1940, 372–377; Kijas 2007, 151.

222 Rasovskii 1933, 60.

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groups were rarely hostile. The Slavic farmers had become accustomed to the proximity of the nomads whom they called 'our pagans'.[223]

The Cherni Klobuci's main dwellings sprawled from south of Kiev to the Ros' River. The Torchesk stronghold, the heart of their settlement, had been located there since the end of the 11th century. Six other strongholds, which belonged to the nomads serving the Kievan princes, were situated by the Ruta River, the left tributary of the Ros' River.[224] The Rus' Pechenegs, who were probably considered to be a part of the Cherni Klobuci, inhabited a narrow strip of Kievan land between the Dnieper River, the upper course of the Karan' and the Alta River. In 1142, the Rus' chronicles recorded the Pechenegs under command of Lazar, holder of the Sakov stronghold.[225] Eight years later, they mentioned that the Turpei a little-known ethnic group, lived in the same area and because of that they were usually associated with the Pechenegs.[226] In the Principality of Pereiaslav, the Cherni Klobuci's dwellings were spread south of the rampart surrounding its capital city.[227]

It seems that the Pechenegs did not have a very prominent status among the Cherni Klobuci. Rus' sources portray to a greater extent the role of the Torks and Berendei. What is significant is that the name of the main Cherni Klobuci settlement clearly referred to the Torks. Moreover, steppe-dwellers arrived in Rus' in greater numbers after the death of Iaroslav the Wise, ca. 1060,[228] when the main groups of Pechenegs had already left the Black Sea steppe. The fact that the Rus' chronicles suddenly mention them after more than a half a century of silence is particularly puzzling. Additionally, since the end of the 11th century, the Pechenegs had been mentioned usually together with the Torks-Uzes. This raises the question as to whether these are the people who, according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, were separated from this ethnic group in the late 9th century and lived among the Uzes.[229] The same group is also mentioned by Ahmad ibn Fadlān, who met some poverty-stricken Pechenegs while he was wandering through the Caspian steppes.[230] However, it is difficult to believe they survived as a distinct group for 200 years while living under the leadership of the Torks-Uzes. Considering the scarcity of sources, these developments must be treated as a difficult to prove hypothesis. Nevertheless, all of

223 Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 134.
224 Rasovskii 1933, 53–55.
225 Ip.Let., AM 6650 (1142), col. 311.
226 Rasovskii 1933, 14–15, 59; Morgunov 2010, 68.
227 Rasovskii 1933, 59–60.
228 Morgunov 2010, 68.
229 DAI, XXXVII 51–57 (p. 168). Cf. Chapter 3 of the present book.
230 ibn Fadlan: ibn Fadlan, 212; Zeki Validi Togan 1939, 33; Kovalevskii 1956, 130; Frye 2005, 42.

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the above does not change the fact that among the three main Turkic groups which comprised the Cherni Klobuci, the Pechenegs were the weakest and least numerous. As mentioned before, in the 12th century, the Rus' chronicles described at length the actions of the Torks and Berendei. The toponyms in the Ros' basin indicate, above all, the presence of the Torks-Uzes, Cumans, and even Khazars, but not the Pechenegs.[231]

The last reference to the Pechenegs in the chronicles comes from 1169, which leads us to assume that in the last third of the 12th century they were no longer a separate group due to the influence of the other, stronger groupings of Cherni Klobuci, which ceased to exist as a result of the Mongol invasion. Rashid al-Din was the last writer to mention them, stating that Batu Khan attacked a tribe of 'black hats' in 1240.[232] Their later fate is purely a subject of hypothetical speculation. Mikhailo Hrushevski claimed that the Cherni Klobuci were forced by the Mongols to return to the steppe as their slaves.[233] Other researchers have suggested that they might have survived in Rus' and later became part of the Cossack movement.[234] Finally, the Cherni Klobuci are also considered by some to be the ancestors of the Karakalpaks who lived by the Aral Sea.[235]

The presence of the Pechenegs is confirmed by place names that appear not only on the outskirts of Kiev and Pereiaslav, but also in other regions of the old Rus'. Not far from Kolomyia in the Pokutia region there is a village called Pechenezhyn. It is difficult to say under what circumstances this village was founded. The village is sometimes associated with the arrival of groups of Pechenegs, Torks, and Berendei to the lands of Prince Vasylko of Terebovlia, who later led them to attack Polish lands, as mentioned in the chronicles.[236] Pechenezhyn is believed to have been inhabited by military settlers who protected the Principality of Halych in the south from invasion by steppe-dwellers and guarded the road leading through the Iablunits'kii Pass.[237] A 'Pecheneg burial mound' (*mogila Pechenegi*) is located on the border of Volhynia, near Zvenigorod. Dmitri. A. Rasovskii has suggested that the inhabitants of this settlement were tasked with guarding the road leading from Kiev to Hungary and securing the border between the Principality of Halych and Volhynia.[238] In the vicinity of Przemyśl there was once a village called Pecheneie,[239] and

231 Morgunov 2010, 70.
232 Rasovskii 1933, 62.
233 Grushevs'kii 1905, 551.
234 Cf. Rasovskii 1933, 63; Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk 1985, 79.
235 For a critical look at such views: Golden 1996, 98–100.
236 PVL 1, AM 6605 (1097), col. 266. Cf. Morgunov 2010, 70.
237 Rasovskii 1933, 51.
238 Rasovskii 1933, 52.
239 Grushevs'kii 1905, 585; Rasovskii 1933, 52.

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the village of Pecheniugi once existed near Novohrod-Siverskyi.[240] The lack of additional data makes it difficult to determine the significance of these two settlements or how their inhabitants supported themselves.

The acculturation of the Turkic nomads living in Rus' did not progress smoothly. In particular, the groups belonging to the Cherni Klobuci continued to lead a nomadic lifestyle and engage in activities characteristic of nomadic life. Apart from some members of the elite who moved to Kiev, the vast majority of steppe-dwellers remained pagans. This was possible due both to the landforms and ecosystems of Rus', as its forest steppes were conducive to extensive herding, as well as to the Rurikids' policies towards these people. It was in their interest to have at their disposal an armed force whose members preserved the military prowess characteristic of nomads. Their sedentarization and cultural assimilation might have caused these advantages to disappear.[241] On the other hand, the Rurik dynasty had neither the power nor the means to successfully convert nomads to Christianity in the way the Arpads did in the 11th-century in Hungary. This was especially true after Vladimir Monomakh's death, when a fierce rivalry for the Kievan throne ensued and led to frequent changes in who ruled the capital city. Finally, we can only speculate on whether the methods of the Hungarian rulers could have been adopted in Rus', which belonged to the Byzantine world, a world that was much more cautious than Latin Europe, almost to the point of passivity, in carrying out missionary activities.

7.4 The Pechenegs under Piast Dynasty Rule (?)

Polish historiographers for a long time held the opinion that relations between the first Piasts, especially Bolesław Chrobry, and the Pechenegs were that of good neighbours.[242] In truth, they were neither good nor neighborly. In the previous chapter, the political dimension of the relations between the early Piast monarchy and the Pechenegs were analyzed in detail. It can be concluded that

240 Rasovskii 1933, 60.

241 Rasovskii 1933, 63–64.

242 Zakrzewski 1925, 224 ('[…] Bolesław generally had a good rapport with the Pechenegs […]'.), 307; Bieniak 2010, 156 (The Pechenegs were already Chrobry's allies during St. Bruno of Querfurt's mission to the steppe-dwellers), 160 (The Pechenegs as participants of Mieszko II's expedition against the Saxons, dated to 1028 or 1030); Tyszkiewicz 2003, 37 (Mieszko I had already maintained intensive communication with the Pechenegs). Recently also: Tyszkiewicz 2014, 188. According to Tyszkiewicz, Bolesław Chrobry's influence reached as far as the Dniester and the lower Dnieper, which means it actually spanned nearly the entire area inhabited by the Pechenegs in the early 11th century.

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these relations were episodic and limited to their participation in Bolesław Chrobry's two expeditions to Rus' (1013 and 1018). The Pechenegs were most likely involved in them as allies of the Rus' prince Sviatopolk, who, as sources indicate, maintained political relations with the steppe-dwellers and made use their military support numerous times. However, there is no analogous data confirming the existence of any kind of formal agreement between the nomads and the first Piasts. It is often argued that the geopolitical situation supports the hypothesis of a Polish-Pecheneg alliance. The political rivalry on the Polish-Rus' border would have supposedly naturally led to an alliance of this kind. The problem here is that what should hypothetically result from a geopolitical situation is not always what actually happens. Although the geographical situation of the Pechenegs and the Byzantine Empire forced them to coexist, relations between them were always complicated and not always the result of rational motivations. Constantine Porphyrogenitus's doctrine, which postulated a special relationship with the Pechenegs, had a relatively short life, probably not much longer than the independent reign of this emperor.[243] Byzantine diplomacy at times favored other partners who were more demanding, but also more predictable, as the court in Constantinople tended to perceive the Pechenegs to be a sort of a political amoeba.[244] However, the Empire, which for centuries had nomads as neighbours, was forced to take them into account in its policies. It is unlikely that the same was true in the case of the Piast monarchs, as their lands bordered the areas controlled by the steppe-dwellers for only a very short time, i.e., in the years 1018–1031.[245]

A separate question is that of the Pechenegs' presence on the lands ruled by the Piasts. This presence, as in the case of other states in Central and Eastern Europe, may have taken the form of brief armed incursions or of more permanent settlement. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the steppe-dwellers probably carried out raids in southeastern Poland. The sources also provide evidence that Pechenegs settled on Polish lands. This is indicated by a group of five toponyms, such as 'Pieczeniegi' and 'Pieczonogi', found on the left bank of the Vistula, between Kraków and Staszów. They form two clusters some 80 km apart. The first cluster consists of three settlements located near Miechów, north-east of Kraków. The second cluster is comprised of two villages a dozen or so kilometers apart: Pieczonogi, near Oleśnica, and Pieczonóg-Gacki, near Szydłów.[246] The nature of these settlements is unclear. Polish researchers have

243 Cf. Chapter 5.4.

244 Cf. the statements made by John Mauropous cited in the first part of this chapter.

245 Cf. the discussion in Chapter 6.1.

246 Rymut 1967, 123–124; Modrzewska 1969, 365; 1984, 32–34; Tryjarski 1975a, 616.

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sometimes claimed that these were cases of military settlement.[247] Such speculation is difficult to confirm or disprove. It is more probable, though still not proven, that the villages were inhabited by captives who performed menial labour. This thesis is supported by the results of research carried out on the cemetery in Gorysławice, near Wiślica, i.e., at a site located in between the two groups of Pecheneg-derived toponyms.[248] The graves found there date back to the latter half of the 11th and early 12th century. The human remains discovered there have anthropological features characteristic of so-called Eurasian types. Out of 20 skulls selected for analysis, 17 individuals show characteristics of a caucasoid-mongoloid racial mix and one of the mongoloid race. However, the features of this burial site do not differ from those of burial site found in other 11th- and 12th-century cemeteries in Małopolska, and no traces of Eastern, steppe origns were found.[249] Witold Świętosławski has also pointed out that steppe vegetation occurs in the area around Gorysławice.[250] Taking into consideration the above facts, one can assume that former nomads settled on the Nida River near Wiślica, but that these were not military settlers, but rather people living in servitude who engaged in herding.

There is no hard data indicating the Pechenegs maintained a long-term presence among the troops of the first Piasts (or rather of Bolesław Chrobry). As mentioned above, Thietmar's writings do not confirm such a presence. During both expeditions to Rus', the steppe-dwellers temporarily served as mercenaries, whose abilities the Polish ruler did not assess highly. The occasionally discovery in Poland of elements of military equipment of foreign, eastern origin, such as a 'snaffle bit' with a rigid mouth piece,[251] is not evidence that Pecheneg warriors served the Piasts. Weapons changed hands as loot and war trophies. The same is true of riding tack when a horse was captured. Today researchers challenge the view that a bit with a rigid mouth pieces unambiguously identifies the remains as belonging to the Pechenegs. This element of equestrian

247 Łowmiański 1975, 47–48. 'Located along the left bank of the Vistula, the Pechenegs' settlements had to [sic! – A.P.] help contain the invasion of people from their own ethnic group'.

248 Recently Witold Świętosławski wrote about them (2006a, 120–121).

249 Charzewska 1963, 199–211. In a study published in the same volume, Wojciech Szymański, concludes that the cemetery in Gorysławice was established by the inhabitants of Wiślica in the latter half of the 11th century, and was in use until the beginning of the next century. The researcher found no foreign ethnic characteristics among the deceased there. Cf. Szymański 1963, 190–191.

250 Świętosławski 2006a, 121 (note 17).

251 Wołoszyn 2004, 258–259; Kollinger 2014, 396.

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accoutrement is most certainly of steppe origin, and could have been used by the Pechenegs, but not necessarily only by them.[252]

The modest available source data suggests that, as in the case of political relations, the presence of the Pechenegs on Polish lands was very limited. Although they probably resided in the lands of the Piasts, their role – especially in comparison with those members of their ethnic group who settled in Byzantium, Hungary, and Rus' – was minor.

252 Cf. Armarchuk 2006, 40–41; Spinei 2009, 294–295.

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Conclusion

Among the nomadic peoples who migrated to Europe, the Pechenegs seem to have occupied a relatively weak position. After all, they never built a great empire and never became a dominant force in the political relations of the south-eastern part of the continent. Their role and significance was smaller than that of their contemporaries, the Khazars. Yet this seemingly obvious statement is based on the false notion that the Pechenegs differed from other steppe ethne that could claim more spectacular achievements. This is not necessarily true. Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), the Arab historian and philosopher, claimed that empires built by nomads tended to last no longer than 120 years. By the third generation, signs of decline were usually already visible. It is difficult to deny the accuracy of the Muslim scholar's insight. It should be added, though, that the lifespan of some of the great states created by nomads was even shorter. Against this background, the over 300-year history of the Khazar Khaganate seems a remarkable achievement. Even the best organized nomad political structures usually collapsed, often due to the disintegration of the ethnos that had formed it. In this respect, the fate of such empire builders as the Huns, Avars, and Khazars was no different than that of the Pechenegs. After a period of strength and vitality, all of these peoples disappeared without a trace. As the old Rus' proverb quoted in the introduction of the present book says, they all 'perished like the Avars'. It is true, of course, that the lack of a strong political centre greatly influenced how the Pechenegs related to the outside world. Their loose, segmentary structure made them capable of defending their independence, but prevented effective expansion and longer-term policy planning. The Pechenegs' actions were most often merely reactions to external political stimuli. Yet they existed as an independent ethnos despite their segmentary structure for some 300 years, almost as long as the imperial Khazars. Over those three centuries they also enjoyed significant political importance, the peak of which fell in the mid-10th century. At that time, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus saw them as being key to maintaining equilibrium in Eastern Europe. Their loose political structures should therefore be viewed as an alternative model of community formation that contrasted sharply with those found in strongly centralized nomadic states.

Previous academic studies have underestimated the strength of the Pechenegs' ethnic identity. The most eminent experts on the subject have tended to believe they lacked a strong sense of unity and solidarity. This was said to be proven by the internal conflicts that arose among them. However, a people like the Pechenegs, who were able to defend their independence for

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a substantial period of time, must have felt a strong community bond. The scarcity of available sources makes it impossible to determine more precisely what cultural values served to strengthen this bond. In general, we can only infer what comprised the content of the Pechenegs' traditions, the influence of which was clearly revealed in their contacts with outsiders. This is particularly evident in the late period of the Pechenegs' history. Finding themselves in a foreign environment – both in terms of the natural conditions and the cultural patterns of the majority population – they strove to preserve their individuality. The consequences of this were dramatic. The Pechenegs' continuation of their old way of life led to an acute conflict with Byzantium, which ultimately brought about the annihilation of the steppe-dwellers' independence. Their situation in Rus' and Hungary was very different – but even there, a change in the political loyalties of Pecheneg groups was accompanied by a demonstration of their distinctiveness.

However, the relationship between these nomads and the outside world cannot be described only in terms of violence. It is true, of course, that the Pechenegs were a warrior people, capable at times of great cruelty. Valour, measured by the number of enemies killed, was among the virtues they appreciated most. Their aggression, however, had a rational basis and was often a response to the expansive actions of their neighbours. The history of relations between the Rus' and the Pechenegs at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries provides examples that support this thesis. The growth of Kiev and the accompanying shift in the southern border of Rus' and the political and economic expansion of the Rurik dynasty clearly threatened the interests of the Pechenegs. Rus' rulers disrupted the Pechenegs' trade relations and took control of their trade routes. The chronicle tradition presents the actions of Kiev's rulers, especially those of Vladimir the Great, as a defence against the aggression of the steppe-dwellers. It seems, however, that this account is heavily marked by the founding myth of Rus', according to which the Rurik princely dynasty was established to create the foundations for terrestrial and cosmic order, and to oppose the dark forces of chaos. As a group that was radically different culturally, the Pechenegs were well suited for the role of 'dark forces of chaos' and functioned ideally as an Other. Blame for various bloody border conflicts was always placed on them, though the truth was more complicated and much less unambiguous.

The role of the Pechenegs in trade is likewise underestimated. Among researchers the dominant stereotype of the Pecheneg nomads is one of a group whose activities contributed largely to a decline in trade. However, data from written sources indicate that the Pechenegs may have also played a significant role in the conduct of trade. In the 10th century, they acted as valuable

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intermediaries between the Byzantine Kherson and the lands adjacent to the steppe. They also made use of trade routes established earlier by the Khazars. It is worth remembering that the development of Kiev and Volga Bulgaria was possible due to the destruction of the *Pax Chazarica* and the weakening of the Pechenegs in the late 10th century. New political power centres in the north created a more favourable trade network for them, while also disrupting older trade relations.

The fate of the Pechenegs depended largely on the situation not only on the steppe itself, but also in the lands surrounding it. In the latter half of the 10th century, the Black Sea steppe became a niche, surrounded by strong political powers everywhere but in the east. Such an orientation in geopolitical relations was generally quite unfavourable to these nomads, as it precluded the establishment of relations with both the North (dominated by steppe-dwelling nomads and their hinterland) and the South (agricultural civilizations); the development of such a north-south alignment would have been much more favourable to the Pechenegs. After the steppe became a political niche, the role of its inhabitants rapidly diminished. Their territory was seen by neighbouring states as, at best, a kind of buffer zone separating different spheres of influence. However, the demographic dominance of agricultural communities pushed nomadic groups, even forced them, to expand their area of migratory settlement. This could lead to the displacement of nomads from their lands, a process which, as the example of the Pechenegs proves, they were unable to halt. The transformation of the Black Sea steppe into a niche also coincided with the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate. This created a terrible situation for the Pechenegs, because the fall of the Khazar Empire also brought down a bulwark that had slowed the migration of nomadic peoples. As a result of these ethnic shifts, the Pechenegs' Black Sea niche became boxed-in on three sides, making it impossible to move out of the area without crossing into the lands of neighbouring states. The Pechenegs were the first people in the history of Europe to face this problem. The Hungarians, who had been driven out by them earlier, were able to simply migrate beyond the Carpathians and, like the Avars had in the past, occupy steppe lowlands on the Tisza and central Danube. For the Pechenegs, such a flight to the west was no longer possible.

Although migration beyond the steppe theoretically did not have to bring about the end of their history as an independent people, it triggered processes that, at best, would have led to a radical transformation of the nomads' cultural universe. The examples of the Hungarians and the Danube and Volga Bulgars show that under such conditions nomadic communities could maintain their independence and create strong political organisms capable of surviving for centuries after leaving the steppe. The price for such success, however, was the

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complete abandonment of their former nomadic identity, and the loss of many of the values associated with it. Much depended on the political traditions cultivated by a given ethnos. Accustomed to living in an egalitarian community, the Pechenegs were not able to create an early state in the Balkans, like those of the Bulgars or Hungarians. For them, leaving the Black Sea steppe was tantamount to the end of their role as an actor in the region's history. The Pechenegs' final half century of conflicts with Byzantium was merely an epilogue to their story as a free people.

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Index

Abbasid Caliphate 82, 156 (n. 114)
Abioi 35
Abkhaz tribes 75
Abu-l-Gazi, khan of Khiva 90
Adam of Bremen 13
Adrianople 111, 231, 237, 329, 337–340, 353–355, 363–364
Aegean Sea 62, 365
Aests/Aesti 64
Agathyrsi 29–30, 47
Ainos 329, 361, 365
Akatziri 72–73, 144 (n. 71)
Akhtuba, branch of the Volga River 23,
Akkerman 42
Alania 82, 138, 141, 182, 205 (n. 381), 240
Alans/Alani 55, 58, 62, 67–68, 75, 78, 89, 91, 141, 182, 254, 264, 268–269, 272, 281
Alaunoi *see* Alans
Alazones 50
Alba Iulia 373, 379
Albania 87
Alba Transsilvana *see* Alba Iulia
Aleksandr Popovich, legendary Rus' heroe 295–296
Aleppo 273, 347
Alexander the Great 53
Alexander I, Byzantine Emperor 258
Alexios I Komnenos, Byzantine emperor 6–9, 188 (n. 281), 191–193, 195, 229, 231, 357–358, 360–366, 371; as domestikos: 237, 355–356
Alföld, *see* Hungarian Plain
Almatai river 124
Álmos, Magyar prince 108 (n. 85)
Alta river 314–315, 385
Altai mountains 22, 35, 83, 94 (n. 36)
Amage, Sarmatian queen 57
Amali, royal clan of the Ostrogoths 63, 65, 68, 84
Amazons 54
Amir Timur, Turko-Mongol khan 232
Ammianus Marcellinus 64, 66, 69, 215, 225 (n. 484)
Amu Darya river 39, 82, 103
Anacharsis, famous Scythian 52 (n. 36)
Anatolia 252
Anchialos 260, 262–263, 329
Androphagi 29, 35
Andrzej Taranowski 41–43
Anna Komnena, Byzantine princess 7–9, 92, 149, 170–171, 185, 191, 193–195, 199–200, 205, 231–232, 332, 359–361, 363–364, 366, 376
Anna Porphyrogenita 299, 310, 318
Antioch 229, 368
An-ts'ai/Yen-ts'ai people 58 (n. 78)
Aorsoi/Aorsi 58, 89
Apennines 71
Apros 364
Arabs 80, 261, 269, 273, 276
Arad 205 (n. 381)
Aral Sea 31, 37, 82, 86, 88–90, 93, 95, 103, 105, 121, 224, 386
Araros, *see* Siret River
Araxes/Aras, *see* Syr-Darya
Arcadiopolis 193, 288, 290, 329
Ardābil 268, 272
Ardys, king of Lydia 48
Argeş river 30
Argos 62
Arianitzes, strategos of the Macedonia thema 334
Arimaspoi 49
Armenia 69, 74, 82, 112–113
Arpad, Magyar prince 108, 118
Arpads/Arpad dynasty 110, 348, 377–378, 380–383, 387
Arpadian kingdom, *see* Hungary
Artamonov, Mikhail I. 123, 283 (n. 164)
As/Asi, *see* Alani
Ashina clan/Ashinids 75, 77, 94, 148
Ashina Turks, *see* Göktürk
Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria 48
Asia 1–2, 37, 198
  Central 56, 65, 89, 93, 232
  Inner 2, 52, 78, 89–90, 162, 211, 226, 283
  Minor 48, 74, 279, 349, 371
  West 48–50, 58–59, 69
Askania-Nova 20
Askold, Varangian prince 110

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Asparukh, khan of Danube Bulgaria 77, 127, 342
Assyria 48
Astrakhan 24, 40, 42, 45
Ašguzi, *see* Scythians
Atavin, Andrei 227 (n. 494)
Atelkouzou/Etelköz 108, 112, 117, 119, 122–126, 241, 248, 255
Athanaricus, iudex of the Visigoths 68
Athaul 64
Atheas, Scythian king 52–53, 56
Athens 51, 62
al-Athīr, Ali ibn 12
Atil/Itil, *see* Volga River
Atrak, Uze leader 216–217
Attica 29
Attila, Hun king 70–72, 84, 144 (n. 71), 215
Augusta Honoria 71
Aulê 337
Aurelian, Roman emperor 62
Avars/Avar Khaganate 1, 73–77, 80, 84, 156 (n. 114), 168, 187 (n. 279), 193, 198, 214, 216, 244, 391, 393
Ayyubid dynasty 12
Axios, *see* Vardar river
Azaq 42
Azov
  Massif 25
  Sea of 24, 26–29, 31, 33–35, 37, 42–43, 51, 55, 58, 61–62, 64, 66, 78, 82, 110, 116, 119, 123, 245–246, 249–250
  town, *see* Azaq

Bab al-Awab, *see* Derbent
Bács comitatus 379
Bačkovo 358
Baghdad 11, 38, 82
Bağnà 271
Bajghird 184, 268
Bajna 184, 268
Bajnāk 184, 268–269
al-Bakrī, Abu ʻUbaid 11, 95, 98, 101, 145–147, 220–221, 225 (n. 485)
al-Baladuri, Ahmad ibn Yahyā 113
Balamber, Hun ruler 68–69
Balaton Lake 244, 380
Balčik 320
Balkan
  Peninsula 253
  Mountains 191, 253, 319–320, 329, 334–338, 340, 342, 351, 356–358, 360–362, 364
Balkans (region) 7, 13, 17, 70–71, 163, 175, 184, 191, 215, 224–225, 253, 264, 274, 276, 285–286, 288–289, 317, 320–321, 326, 330, 332, 334, 336, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349–350, 353, 355–360, 369, 374, 376, 394
Balkhash Lake 37, 82–83, 86, 93
Baltic Sea 64, 65
Baltzar, Kegenes' father 322
Baltzar, Kegenes' older son 336
Banat 58, 68
Bărăgan Plain 244–245
Baranya comitatus 379
Bardas Skleros, Byzantine commander 318
Barfield, Thomas J. 148 (n. 86), 186 (n. 272)
Bari 357
Barouch, *see* Dnieper
Bars comitatus 378
Bartha, Antal 117 (n. 126)
Barthold, Wilhelm 290
Bashkiria 39, 90, 100 (n. 64), 114, 116, 124
Bashkirs 103, 169
Basich, Hun leader 69
Basil II, Byzantine emperor 221 (n. 464), 299, 317–319
Basil, syncellus, Byzantine commander 339–341
Basil Apokapes, magister and doux 345
Basilakes, doux of Dyrrachion 355
Batbaian, Onogur Bulgar leader 76
Battuta, Muhammad ibn 39–40
Batu Khan, ruler of the Golden Horde 36–37, 187 (n. 278), 189 (n. 286), 220, 386
Bavaria 233
Bedouins 228 (n. 499)
Belaia river 100, 103, 114, 121
Be-ča-nag, *see* Pechenegs
Beiru, *see* Pei-ju
Bek-Bike 201
Béla III, king of Hungary 14, 379
Belemarnis 139
Belgrade 36, 328 348, 353, 376
Belgorod Kievski 205, 295
Beliatova 359–360

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Belobereg 290
Bempetziotes, Byzantine commander 361
Benedict IX, pope 306 (n. 60)
Benedict the Pole/Benedictus Polonus 36–37
Benjamin, khan of the Khazars 254
Berdaa 278 (n. 145)
Berendei 369–370, 383, 385–386
Berig, king of the Goths 59–60
Beroia 329, 332, 363, 367–370, 376
Bessarabia 28
Bessi/Bisseni, *see* Pechenegs
Bihar 374
Bihar comitatus 379
Bilge Khan 214
Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi, *see* Akkerman
Bilter 321
al-Biruni, Abu Rayhan 90
Bistriţa 374
Bithynia 62, 149, 278, 334
Black Sea 20–21, 25–29, 32, 36–37, 41–42, 44, 52, 59–62, 64, 82, 90, 107, 123, 146, 160, 183, 242, 245, 247, 249, 252, 257, 261, 268, 271, 277–280, 298, 335, 342, 351
  Lowland 26–27
  Plate 25–26, 28
  steppe 12, 16–17, 19–21, 25, 28–29, 33–37, 40–41, 44, 47, 49–51, 53–63, 65–66, 69, 71, 73–78, 80–81, 84–85, 89–90, 93, 97, 100, 102, 105, 109, 111–115, 117–119, 122, 125–127, 129, 139, 153, 161–162, 166, 169–171, 175, 180–183, 186, 201–202, 205 (n. 381), 211, 222–223, 233, 240–241, 243, 245–246, 248, 250–255, 257–258, 272, 276, 279–280, 282–283, 289–291, 300–302, 316, 321, 326–327, 330–332, 349, 360, 368–369, 372–373, 375, 385, 393–394
Bleda, Hun king 70
Bodrog comitatus 379
Bodva river 379
Bogou river, *see* Boh
Boh river 25–26, 30–31, 44, 53, 120, 122–124, 248–251
Bolaq 172 (n. 199)
Bolesław Chrobry (the Brave), king of Poland 13, 237, 287, 302–303, 306–307, 310–316, 373, 387–389
Bolshoi Kinel river 103
Bolshoi Uzen river 121
Borani tribe 62
Borğan 271
Boris-Michael, Bulgarian ruler 253
Boris, St and Rus' prince 310–312
Borisov, Boris 320 (n. 135)
Borotalmat 138, 141–142, 190, 240, 249, 251
Borsod comitatus 379
Borysthenes, *see* Dnieper River
Bosporan Kingdom 53, 59, 61
Bosporus, Byzantine city in Crimea 75, 240, 245
Bosporus (Byzantine) Strait 278, 334
Boulatzopon 138, 141–142, 240, 249, 251
Boulgarophygon 255, 329, 365
Brand, Charles M. 367 (n. 138)
Bratislava/Pozsony comitatus 378, 381
Briansk 26, 247
Bronze Age 54, 168
Broutos, *see* Prut
Bruno of Querfurt, St and misssionary 13, 149–150, 198–199, 221 (n. 464), 222–224, 228–229, 296, 298, 302–303, 306–310
Bryennios, Byzantine patrician and ethnarch 340
Bubegenas 64
Budjak 250
Bug river 303, 305
Bukhara 82
Bulchu, legendary Magyar warrior 233
Bulgaria
  Great 76, 80, 342
  Danube 17, 77, 126, 137, 189, 206 (n. 385), 236, 240–241, 245, 248, 250, 256–260, 262, 264, 272–273, 275–280, 284–285, 287–290, 317–318, 335
  Volga(-Kama) 38–40, 77, 129, 205 (n. 381), 297, 393
  Republic of 127, 170, 175, 271, 335, 350
  thema of 214, 319, 326
Bulgarians 242, 253, 255–256, 258, 261–262, 271, 277, 280, 286–287, 346, 358
Bulgars
  Black Bulgars 78, 116, 246
  Danube 73–74, 92, 127–128, 160, 163, 170, 174, 180, 184, 195, 220, 236, 282, 297, 321, 342–343, 393–394

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Bulgars (cont.)
Onogur Bulgars 76
Volga-Kama Bulgars 10–11, 96, 98–100, 102–103 127–129, 169, 182, 216–217, 266 (n. 106), 281–282, 300, 393
Bulkār/Bulghār, *see* Volga-Kama Bulgars
Burdas/Burtas 10, 80, 99–102, 103, 107, 126, 266 (n. 106), 281–282
Burebista, king of Dacians 57
Bury, John B. 114–115
Byzantine Commonwealth 252
Byzantine Empire, *see* Byzantium
Byzantines 109, 144 (n. 71), 192–193, 219–220, 222, 229, 231, 235–236, 268, 277, 322–324, 327, 333, 335–336, 338–339, 341, 343, 360–362, 364, 371
Byzantium 3–7, 9, 17, 35–36, 70, 72, 74–76, 80, 85, 90, 126, 128, 130–131, 138, 141, 146, 149, 151, 159–160, 166, 170–171, 181, 184, 188 (n. 283), 191, 204, 216–217, 221 (n. 464), 223–224, 237–238, 245, 252–253, 255–264, 266–267, 269, 272–275, 277–281, 285–286, 288–289, 291, 296, 299, 305, 312, 317–319, 323–326, 330–333, 338, 341–351, 354, 356–358, 360–362, 364–366, 368, 370–373, 380–381, 388, 390, 392, 394
Byzas 353

Cairo 16
Callimachus of Cyerene 47 (n. 2)
Callippidae 50
Cambrai 13, 163
Capidava 319–320, 323, 329
Cappadocia 48, 347
Car Asen 320
Caraș river 243 (n. 13)
Carpi, Dacian people 60
Carpathian Basin 112
Carpathian Mountains 23, 49, 111, 113, 118, 160, 244, 246, 248, 250–251, 321, 372, 375, 393
Casimir I, prince of Poland 306 (n. 60)
Caspian Depression, *see* Caspian Plain
Caspian Lowland, *see* Caspian Plain
Caspian
Plain 21, 23–25, 46
Sea 20, 23, 25, 31, 37, 42, 48, 78, 82, 85, 97, 99, 103, 205 (n. 381), 244, 265, 278 (n. 145)
steppe 16, 19–21, 36–37, 40–41, 45, 58, 66, 71, 74, 76–77, 80–81, 85, 152, 233, 300, 349, 385
Catalaunian Fields 71
Caucaland 68
Caucasus Mountains 25, 36, 44–45, 49–50, 58, 62, 69, 74–75, 77, 80, 82, 87, 182–183, 244, 251, 268, 282
North 25, 49, 56, 73, 78, 281
South 48–50, 58, 80, 112–114
Celts 201
Central Russian Upland 24
Chang'an 83
Charaboï 141–142, 240, 249–251
Charaton, Hun king 69
Cherkess (Circassians) 114–115, 281
Cherni Klobuci 15, 201, 383–387
Cherniakhov culture 59, 63, 65
Chernigov city 312, 315
principality 384
Chernogorivka culture 47
Cherven' Towns 294 (n. 10), 297, 303–304, 316
Chliat 347
China 35, 67, 73, 75, 83, 85, 93, 168, 171, 186 (n. 272), 214–215
Ching-lung Chen 198 (n. 343)
Chingul river 119
Chios island 365
Chişinău 26
Chuhuiv 27
Cimmerian Bosporus, *see* Kerch Strait
Cimmerians 3, 47–50
Chidmas/Chingilous 107, 119–122, 125
Chingisids 157
Choirobakchoi 345
Chopon, *see* Giazichopon
Chud/Chuds 64 (n. 130), 295
Claudius Gothicus, Roman emperor 62
Claudius Ptolemy 35, 40, 55, 59
Cód river 379
Coldas 64
Cogîlnic river 129
Coman, Aleksander 198 (n. 343)

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Comania, land of the Cumans 36–37
Comşa, Maria 243 (n. 12)
Conrad I, king of East Francia 233
Constantia 242, 275 (n. 135), 320, 329
Constantine I, Byzantine emperor 297
Constantine IV, Byzantine emperor 342
Constantine V, Byzantine emperor 81
Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Byzantine Emperor 3–5, 35, 43, 86–87, 92, 96–98, 104–109, 112–124, 126, 135–142, 145, 147, 149–153, 155–158, 162, 164, 179 (n. 242), 180–181, 184, 187, 189–191, 207, 209–210, 212, 215–216, 235–236, 240–241, 245–246, 248–250, 252, 254–255, 257–259, 263, 265, 267, 280–281, 283, 285, 289, 291, 297, 302, 305, 318, 385, 388, 391
Constantine VIII, Byzantine emperor 202 (n. 371), 319
Constantine IX Monomachos, Byzantine emperor 149, 153 (n. 103), 170, 214, 224, 230, 322, 325, 332–341, 343
Constantine X Dukas, Byzantine emperor 345, 347, 352
Constantine(-Cyril), St, Byzantine missionary 110 (n. 93)
Constantine, heteriarchos, Byzantine commander 338
Constantine Arianites, doux of the West 337, 339
Constantine Bodin, ruler of Duklja 349
Constantine Gongyles, Byzantine dignitary 263
Constntine Diogenes, doux of Bulgaria 319
Constantine Hadrobalanos, Byzantine patrician 334
Constantine Katakalon, Byzantine commander 355
Constantine Lekapenos, Byzantine co-emperor 4
Constantinople 5, 7, 37, 41–42, 70, 72–76, 80–82, 85, 113, 151, 154, 191, 215, 218, 222, 251–254, 257–258, 260–261, 263–264, 267, 270–272, 274–280, 284–285, 288–291, 296–297, 299, 312, 317–320, 322, 325, 327, 329, 334, 336, 338–339, 341, 346–347, 349, 351–354, 356–357, 359, 361, 364–365, 368, 388
Corinth, city 62, 163 (n. 149)
  Gulf of 263
Cossacks 43, 386
Crimea
  Peninsula 27–29, 34, 37–38, 40, 44, 52, 53, 78, 80, 82, 110 (n. 93), 180, 202, 245–246, 252–253, 279, 318
  Mountains 27
Croatia 383
  White 305
Croats 296
Csállóköz, *see* Žitný Ostrov
Csánad 205 (n. 381)
Csebe, Gyula 249 (n. 42)
Csik comitatus 379
Cumans 36, 92, 98, 162, 166, 170, 188 (n. 283), 194, 196, 205 (n. 381), 212, 236 (n. 531), 301, 306 (n. 60), 354–356, 358, 361–364, 366, 368–371, 375–378, 381, 384, 386
Cuni, *see* Cumans
Curta, Florin 350
Cyaxares, king of the Medes 50
Czech monarchy 305
Czech Republic 305
Czeglédy, Karoly 87

Dacia 62
Dacians/Geto-Dacians 3, 57–58, 63
Dagestan 78
Dalmatia 163 (n. 149), 383
Damian of Tarsus, Byzantine renegade and pirate 256
Damatrys 334
Dampolis (Yambol) 329, 337
Danes 313
Danube river 16, 23, 28–30, 36–37, 44, 49, 52, 53, 56–58, 60–62, 68, 70–71, 74, 77, 82, 97, 111, 123–125, 129, 160, 180, 184, 191, 205, 223, 230, 241–245, 247–251, 253, 256, 261, 264, 266, 271–272, 278, 280, 285–288, 316, 318–326, 329–332, 334–335, 342–344, 346, 350–353, 356, 359–361, 367, 369, 371, 374, 378–380, 393
Darius I, king of Persia 51, 54
Debeltos 221 (n. 463), 253, 271, 273–275, 329
Dengizich, Hun leader 72
Derbent 80, 182, 268–269

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Dervent 320, 323, 329
Derevlians/Dervlenines 240, 265, 293
Desht-i Qipchaq, *see* Kipchak Steppe
Desna river 205, 316
Diaconu, Petre 175, 319, 366 (n. 136)
Diakene 229, 337
Di Cosmo, Nicola 155 (n. 108)
Dimitrov, Christo 290 (n. 195)
Dinogetia 163, 320, 323
Diodorus Siculus 55
Diophantus, Mithridates VI Eupator's general 53
Dir, Varangian prince 110
Dnieper
  Lowland 26
  region 25
  river 25–26, 29–31, 34–36, 42–44, 52–53, 57, 61 (n. 110), 74, 76–77, 81–82, 111, 122–125, 137–138, 142, 180, 183, 191, 202 (n. 371), 206, 235 (n. 533), 240–242, 244–245, 247–251, 254, 265, 267, 283, 290, 298, 302, 312, 315, 321–322, 327, 373, 384–385
Dniester
  river 26, 28, 30–31, 36, 42, 44, 52, 64, 68, 122–124, 129, 137, 169, 175, 206 (n. 385), 241, 243–245, 247–251, 301, 303–305
  Upland 303
Dobrudja 17, 28, 53, 56 (n. 67), 69, 72, 242–243, 275, 320–321, 335, 351
Don river 24, 28–31, 34–37, 41–43, 45, 49, 52, 55, 57–58, 61–62, 67, 74, 77–78, 81, 82, 97, 110, 115, 120, 123–125, 160, 163, 202 (n. 371), 241, 243–249, 251, 282, 284
Doncheva-Petkova, Liudmila 350
Donets Severskii
  river 77–78, 120, 123–124, 163, 246, 248–251
  Upland 24–25
Dorostolon, *see* Dristra
Drava river 379
Dregovichi 310
Dridu culture 129, 169–170, 182, 243, 301
Dristra 36, 191–193, 196, 224, 241, 242 (n. 10), 245, 251, 288, 320, 322–323, 329, 343, 352–353, 359, 362
Dudek, Jarosław 308 (n. 71)
Dukas dynasty 353
Dulebi 181
Dulo clan 76, 342
Dyrrachium/Dyrrachion 236–237, 328, 354, 357–358
Dzungaria/Dzungarian Basin 75, 93–94

Eastern Goths, *see* Ostrogoths
East Francia 125, 305
East Slavdom/East Slavic tribes 78, 81, 247, 249, 253, 255, 265–266, 277, 282, 294
Edessa 368
Egypt 11, 29, 49
Eliade, Mircea 227
Ellac, Attila's son 72
Emba river 16, 39, 96, 103, 121
Eneolithic Period 2
Ephorus of Cyme 32
Eratosthenes 32
Erich Lassota von Steblau 43
Ermanaric (*Ermanaricus*), king of the Ostrogoths 63–67, 84
Esarhaddon, king of Assyria 48
Esztergom 378
Ethiopian 335
Euchaita 9, 218, 289, 332
Euphrates river 82
Eurasia 21, 110
  Northern 20
Eurasian continent, *see* Eurasia
Europe 1–2, 12, 17, 20, 23, 55, 64, 66–67, 196, 198, 334, 337, 391
  Central 13, 17, 388
  Eastern 17–19, 26, 40, 78, 118, 273, 291, 388, 391
  Latin 235, 387
  South-Eastern 18
  Western 71, 110–111
European continent, *see* Europe
Europeans 1
Euros river 329, 340, 360, 365–366
Euthymios, Byzantine monk 223, 322
Euxine Sea, *see* Black Sea
Ezekiel 48

(Ibn) Fadlān, Ahmad 11, 38–39, 96–98, 129, 152 (n. 101), 161, 164, 182–183, 212, 216–217, 220–222, 233, 385

Aleksander Paroń - 978-90-04-44109-5
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Farnaces, king of Pontus 57
Fehér, Géza 120, 316, 372 (n. 160)
Fehérvár 380
Fejér comitatus 379–380, 382
Fertő, *see* Lake Neusiedl
al-Fida, Abu 12, 156
Fiedler, Uwe 349 (n. 66)
Filimer, king of the Goths 60, 66
First Bulgarian State, *see* Danube Bulgaria
France 270, 272
Franks 340
Frederick Barbarossa, Roman-German emperor 13
Frs, *see* Persia
Fu-lin, *see* Byzantium

Gabriel, Byzantine clergyman 187, 257–258
Gadlo, Aleksandr V. 283 (n. 164)
Gaievka 202 (n. 371)
Galabrye 237, 329, 355
Galaktophagoi 47
Galicia 270
Galipoli peninsula, *see* Thracian Chersonese
Gallus Anonymus 13
Gansu 21
Gardīzī, ʻAbd al-Hayy b. Dahhak 11, 95, 98, 101–102, 145–146, 164, 196
al-Garnati, Abu Hamid 222 (n. 466)
Garvăn 163, 319–320, 329
Gatalos, king of the Sarmatians 57
Gaul 58, 71
Geïch, *see* Ural river
Genghis Khan 140, 143, 211, 215, 230 (n. 510), 232
George, Armenian monk and chronicler 15
George the Monk, Byzantine chronicler 5
Georgia 48, 87, 112
Georgios Euphorbenos, Byzantine commander 362
Gepids 244
Germania 64
German Kingdom, *see* East Francia
Germanic Ocean, *see* Baltic Sea
Gerros
  land 30
  river 30
Getae 3, 369–370
Géza I, prince of Hungary 377
Géza I, king of Hungary 377, 381; as prince 374
Géza II, king of Hungary 380
Giazichopon 141–142, 240, 248–251, 287
Gieysztor, Aleksander 209 (n. 399)
Gigen 320, 329
Giosafat Barbaro 167
Giovanni da Pian del Carpine 36–37, 166, 176, 198, 200, 219, 225 (n. 484), 228, 248
Gimirrai, *see* Cimmerians
Giurgiu 243 (n. 11)
Glacial Ocean 66
Gleb, St, Rus' prince 310, 312
Göckenjan, Hansgerd 187 (n. 278), 206 (n. 385), 221 (n. 464), 380
Göktürk/Göktürks (Blue Turks) 75–77, 93–94, 148, 156 (n. 114), 157, 160, 168, 210–211, 215–216, 233
Golb, Norman 16
Golden Horde 36–37, 40, 167
Golden, Peter B. 77, 89–91, 116, 135 (n. 35), 156 (n. 116), 179 (n. 242), 180 (n. 246), 186 (n. 272)
Goloe 340
Goliad' 64 (n. 130)
Golthescytha 64
Golubovskii, Petr 246
Gomer, *see* Cimmerians
Gorozheno 202 (n. 371)
Gorysławice 389
Goths 54, 58–63, 65, 68, 77
Gothiscandza 59
Great Migration, *see* Migration Period
Great Moravia 108
Great Steppe 1, 20, 22–23, 31, 77, 81, 90–91, 93–94, 104, 163, 168, 198, 200, 226
Greece 31–32, 51, 62, 74, 263, 266, 365
Greeks 29, 35, 49, 51, 180, 182, 191, 242, 252, 254, 275, 283, 297, 313
Grégoire, Henri 123
Gregorios Pakourianos, Byzantine commander 9, 358, 360
Grenada 12
Greuthungi, *see* Ostrogoths
Gruzsky Elanchik river 42
Guignes, Joseph De 67
Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan 43–44, 189, 191 (n. 297)

Aleksander Paroń - 978-90-04-44109-5
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Gumilev, Lev N. 148, 158, 186 (n. 272)
Gyges, king of Lydia 48
Gyla, *see* Kato Gyla
Györffy, György 91, 111, 248–250, 373
Gythones 60
Gyulafejérvár, *see* Alba Iulia

Habsburgs (dynasty) 43
Hadrianopolis, *see* Adrianople
Haemus, *see* Balkan Mountains
H.ğ, see Ural river
Halicarnassus 28–29, 33
Halirunnae 66
Halych, Principality of 386
Hamdanids, dynasty of Syrian emirs 273, 275
Han dynasty 87
Han Empire, *see* China
Haromszék comitatus 379
ibn Hawqal, Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim 281
Hayer, Peter 161 (n. 137)
Hayrabolu, *see* Kharioupolis
Hecataeus of Miletus 32
Heinrich von Mügeln 14
Helgu/Oleg 278 (n. 145), 279, 282
Hellas, thema of 345
Hellenes, *see* Greeks
Henry I, king of East Francia 274 (n. 133)
Henry II, Roman-German emperor 13, 198–199, 223, 302, 307–308, 312
Henry III, Roman-German emperor 380
Henry, duke of Austria 380
Hensel, Witold 181, 265
Heraclius, Byzantine Emperor 76, 80, 141
Herodotus 1, 28–34, 47–52, 54–55, 73, 92, 161–162, 166, 208, 210, 214, 232
Herules/Heruli 62, 64
Hervé Frankopoulos, commander of the Latin mercenaries 337–338
Heves comitatus 379
Himalayas 35
Hincmar of Reims 110
Hindukush 82
Hippemolgoi 35, 47
(Pseudo-)Hippocrates 33, 54, 161–162
Histria/Istros 60
Holovko, Alexander 309 (n. 77)
Holy Land (Palestine) 13, 163
Homer 35
Honorius, Roman emperor 69
Hont comitatus 378
Hor, *see* Uyghurs
Howard-Johnston, James 254 (n. 55)
Hron river 378
Hrushevski, Mikhailo 386
Hsiung-nu, *see* Xiongnu
Hulagu Khan 232 (n. 516)
Hundred Hills 334–335, 337
Hungarian Lowlands, *see* Hungarian Plain
Hungarian Plain 21, 58, 66, 168, 382
Hungarians 13, 110, 121, 125, 156 (n. 114), 236 (n. 531), 344, 348, 361, 372, 374, 376, 393–394
Hungary 14, 17, 189 (n. 286), 390, 392, 222 (n. 466), 240, 248, 250, 288, 307, 316, 331–332, 344, 348, 370, 373–383, 386–387
Hunimund, king of the Ostrogoths 68
Huns European 1–2, 58, 63, 66–73, 75, 84, 144 (n. 71), 160, 168, 187 (n. 278), 198, 215–216, 391
Hybyl, river 124
Hylaea land 31
Hypakyris river 30–31
Hypanis, *see* Boh river
Hyperboreans 35

Iabdiertim 86, 137, 141–142, 150, 240, 249–251
Iablunits'kii Pass 386
Iakubovskii, Aleksander 168
Ialomiţa river 30
Ialomiţa Wetlands (Balta Ialomiţei) 323
Ian Usmoshvets, legendary Rus' heroe 295
Iaropolk, Rus' prince 293–294, 310
Iaroslav the Wise, Rus' prince 310, 312, 314–317, 327, 385
Iatvingians 294
Iazyges 57–58
Iberia 87, 333–334
I-byil-kor 85
Igor I, Rus' prince 236, 252, 266–267, 275, 278–279, 281
Ili river 73
Ilmen Slavs 293
Illyricum (Illyria) 74, 345, 357

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Imaos Mountains 35
Imniscaris 64
Inaunxis 64
India 40
Inhul river 120
Innocent IV, pope 36
Iran 56
Irene Dukaina, Byzantine empress 7
Irnich, Hun leader 72
Iron Gates 328
Irpin' river 206, 295, 316
Irtim, *see* Iabdiertim
Irtysh river 83, 86, 93, 94 (n. 36), 98
Isaac I Komnenos, Byzantine emperor 7, 343–344, 349, 361–362, 371
Isauria 163 (n. 149)
Isfahan 10
Iskil (Askel) 100
Ismail ibn Ahmed, Samanid ruler 105
Isaccea 320, 329
Issedones 49
al-Iṣṭahri, Abu Ishaq al-Farisi 99
Istros/Ister, *see* Danube river
Iškuzai, *see* Scythians
Italy 71, 74, 77, 272, 312, 357
It-Bäčänä, *see* Pechenegs
Itil, Khazars' capital 78, 281–282
Jagchid, Sechin 161 (n. 137)
Jan Potocki 45–46
Jankovich, Miklos 189 (n. 286)
al-Jarmī, Abu Umar Salih 113
al-Jayhānī, Abu Abdallah 10–11, 97, 145–146, 152

Jaxartes, *see* Syr-Darya river
Jews 277
Johannes Beseny de Nezda, castellan 383 (n. 210)
Johannes de Thurocz/János Thuróczy 14
John I Tzimiskes, Byzantine emperor 218, 242, 288–289, 291, 317, 358
John II Komnenos, Byzantine emperor 7, 332, 367–371
John, St, the Baptist 323
John Bogas, strategos of thema Kherson 235, 259–261, 264
John Bryennios, Byzantine commander 354
John Kinnamos, historian 8, 332, 367
John Kourkouas, Byzantine commander 278
John Mauropous, archbishop of Euchaita, rhetorician 9, 218, 332–333
John Skylitzes, chronicler 5–6, 138–140, 149, 151–153, 170–171, 179 (n. 242), 184, 186 (n. 272), 191, 194, 210, 214, 229 (n. 504), 230–231, 242, 290, 317, 321, 326, 334, 346 (n. 52)
John Vladislav, the ruler of Bulgaria 317
John Zonaras, chronicler 8, 352
Jordanes 59–61, 64, 66–69
Joseph ben Aaron, Khazar khagan 282
Jurjāniyyah 82, 95, 103
Jurjān Sea, *see* Aral Sea
Justinian I, Byzantine emperor 74
Justinian II, Byzantine emperor 81

Kabars/Kabaroi 102, 117–118
Kängär/Känkär, *see* Syr Darya River
Kängäräs 88–91
Kängü Tarban 90
Kagalnik river 43
Kaisareia 347
Kaluga 247
Kama river 23, 77, 100, 103, 114, 117, 121, 127
Kamenka 202 (n. 371)
Kamocki, Janusz 228 (n. 499)
Kangar 86–89, 91–92, 104, 108, 113, 115–118, 121, 124, 137, 150–151, 153, 159, 209–210, 238
K'ang-chü/Kangju 87, 89
Kappadokía, *see* Cappadocia
Karakalpaks 386
Karakum desert 39, 82–83
Karakorum 37, 172 (n. 199), 220
Karaman, Pecheneg chief 334
Karamzin, Nikolai 309
Karan' river 385
Karas I 201
Karluks 88–90, 94 (n. 36), 105, 211
Karpov, Alexei 309 (n. 77), 312 (n. 93)
Kashgar 82–83
al-Kāshgarī, Mahmud 12, 91–92, 198, 219
Kasogians, *see* Cherkess
Katakalon Kekaumenos, Byzantine general, doux of Antioch 229, 337–338
Kataleim, Pecheneg chief 334

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Katasyrtai 263, 339
Kato Gyla/ Chabouxingyla 86, 137, 141–142, 150, 240, 248, 250–251
Kavarna 320
Kazakhs 178 (n. 238)
Kazakhstan 16–17, 20–21, 39, 73, 89, 93, 201
Kazan 23
Kazan Governorate 115
Kazar, Pecheneg chief 348
Kegenes-John, Pecheneg chief 151, 154, 157, 195 (n. 324), 223, 229–230, 238, 322–327, 331–332, 335–341
Kekaumenos, Byzantine commander, author of *Strategikon* 9
Kemey 372
Kerch Peninsula 27
  Strait of 27, 31, 183, 315
Kerlés Mountain 374
Keshan, *see* Rousion
Kézdiszék comitatus 379
Ibn Khaldun, Abu Zayd ʻAbdu r-Rahman b. Muhammad 391
Kharioupolis 329, 340, 361, 364
Khwārazm 38, 39, 95, 103, 205 (n. 381)
Khwārazm Lake, *see* Aral Sea
Khwārazm Mountain, *see* Ustyurt Plateau
al-Khwārizmī, Muhammad ibn Musa 113
Kherson (also Cherson), city and thema 82, 90, 138, 145, 180–183, 215, 240, 245, 251–252, 255, 259–261, 264, 281, 289, 299, 393
Khersonites 181–183, 229
Khiva 90
Khoma 355
Khorasan 39, 112, 217
Khazanov, Anatoly M. 148 (n. 86), 158, 178 (n. 238), 244
Khazaria, *see* Khazar Khaganate
Khazars/Khazar Khaganate 2, 10, 17, 65, 76–81, 84, 90–91, 93, 95–108, 113, 116–118, 126, 138, 141, 156 (n. 114), 160, 168, 178–183, 193, 240–241, 244, 246, 250–251, 254–255, 265, 266 (n. 106), 268–269, 272, 276–277, 279, 281–284, 286, 290–292, 300, 327, 386, 391, 393
Khazar Sea, *see* Caspian Sea
Khopior river 45
Khortitsa 44
Kiev 14, 26, 52, 78, 81, 162, 183, 204, 206–207, 223, 237, 247–248, 250–251, 253–254, 267, 279, 281, 284–291, 293–298, 300, 302, 307–309, 312–316, 318, 321, 325, 327, 383–387, 392, 393
Kievian Rus', *see* Rus'
Kiliya 42
Kimäks/Kimek 88, 90, 105
Kipchaks 98, 100–101, 103, 105, 211
Kipchak Steppe 39–40
Kladenci 320
Klazomenai 365
Kliashtornyi, Sergei 91
Kniaz'kii, Igor O. 249 (n. 42)
Kollinger, Karol 309 (n. 77)
Kolomyia 386
Komárom comitatus 378
Kometopouloi dynasty 318
Komnenoi dynasty 371
Konotop 26, 247
Konovalova, Irina A. 272
Koppány, duke of Somogy 380
Kotovka 202 (n. 371)
Kotrag, the Onogur Bulgar leader 77
Kotwicz, Wacław 233
Kouartzitzour 86, 137–138, 141–142, 150, 240, 249, 251
Koubou, *see* Boh
Koule 361
Koulinos (Goulinos), Pecheneg leader 229, 336
Koulpeï 141
Kouphis, *see* Kuban River
Kouridachus, chief of the Akatziri 72
Kowalczyk, Elżbieta 298 (n. 31)
Kowalski, Tadeusz 130
Kozlov, Sergei A. 368 (n. 142)
Kraków 40, 305, 316, 388
Krakras of Pernikos, Bulgarian commander 317
Kristó, Gyula 108 (n. 89)
Krivichians 295
Krum, Bulgar khan 111
Kuban river 25, 74, 76, 82, 114, 116, 124
Kubrat, khan of the Great Bulgaria 76–77, 342
Kucharski, Eugeniusz 155

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Kuchera, Mikhail 298 (n. 31)
Kuczyński, Stefan M. 294 (n. 10)
Kül Tegin, khan of the Orkhon Turks 88
Kürbis, Brygida 306 (n. 60)
Kunlun mountains 83
Kura river 48, 87
Kurat, Akdes Nimet 18, 179 (n. 242)
Kuria, Pecheneg chief 235 (n. 533), 290
Kushan state 87
Kursich, Hun leader 69
Kutesk, Cuman chief 376
Kutrigurs 74, 76
Kuibyshev 23, 99
Kypsella 329, 364
Kyrgyz/Kirghiz 90, 228 (n. 499)

Ladislaus I, king of Hungary 374
Ladislaus IV, king of Hungary 14
Ladislaus I, duke of Bohemia 380
Lattimore, Owen 154 (n. 107)
Lazar Parpetsi 87
Lazar, holder of the Sakov stronghold 385
Lebedia 107, 110, 112–114, 117, 119–121, 123–125
Lebedias, Magyar voivode 107–108, 110, 117–119, 121–122
Lebounion Hill 18, 225, 231–232, 366–367, 371
Leel, legendary Magyar warrior 233
Lekas, leader and follower of the Paulicianism 224 (n. 481), 355–356
Ledzanians/Lenzenines 240, 265, 297
Leitha river 378
Leo I, Byzantine emperor 72
Leo VI, Byzantine emperor 108, 126, 258–259
Leo I, pope 71
Leo Diabatenos, Byzantine commander
Leo Grammaticus, chronicler 5
Leo Phokas, Byzantine commander 261, 263
Leo of Tripoli, Arab pirate 256
Leo the Deacon, historian 5, 234, 261 (n. 88)
Lesbos island 365
Lesser Poland 305, 389
Leszka, Mirosław J. 260 (n. 81)
Lewicki, Marian 155
Lewicki, Tadeusz 97, 99, 180 (n. 246), 304
Liakhs, *see* Poles
Lietbertus, bishop of Cambrai 13, 163
Little Nicaea 365
Little Preslav, *see* Pereiaslavets
Liubech 312
Lobitzos/Lovech 329, 334
Loewe, Martin 186 (n. 272)
Lorraine 111, 120
Louis I, king of Hungary 382
Louis IX, king of France 37
Louis the German, king of East Francia 110
Lydia 48
Łowmiański, Henryk 49, 65 (n. 135), 95 (n. 40), 114–117, 119–120, 123, 125, 247 (n. 36), 283 (n. 164), 304, 316
Łukiew river 304

Macartney, Carlile A. 99, 110, 113–115, 119, 123, 263, 271
Macedonia 62 (n. 116), 231, 339–340, 346, 353–354, 367
  Northern 170
  thema of 326, 337, 340
Macedonian dynasty 4–5, 296, 318
Maciej of Miechów 40–41
Madgearu, Alexandru 242 (n. 10), 339 (n. 26), 344 (n. 42), 345 (n. 47), 346 (n. 50, 52)
Maenchen-Helfen, Otto 71
Maeotian Swamp, *see* Azov, Sea of
Maeotic See, *see* Azov, Sea of
Maeotis, *see* Azov, Sea of
Maghreb 40, 222 (n. 466)
Magyars 10, 81, 86–88, 90–91, 100, 102, 104–105, 107–120, 122, 124–126, 137, 151, 180, 184, 186–187, 189, 241, 255, 257–258, 261–264, 271–276, 279–280, 286–287, 305, 372
Maïtas, area close to Constantinople 336
Makk, Ferenc 359 (n. 105)
Malkara 364
Maly Uzen 121
Małopolska, *see* Lesser Poland
Manchuria 21, 168
Mani, prophet 224
Maniak, Cuman chief 366
Manzikert 347
Manuel I Komnenos, Byzantine emperor 8
Marcian I, Byzantine emperor 71

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Marcin Broniewski 172 (n. 199)
Marco Polo 165
Marey, Aleksei V. 158
Mari 64
Marianos Maurokatalon, Byzantine commander 361
Maris River, *see* Mureş River
Maritsa, *see* Euros river
Markellai (Markeli) 329, 363
Markov, Gennadii E. 154 (n. 105)
Marmara, Sea of 62
Maros Vásárhely 379
Marquart, Josef 10, 88, 110, 112–113, 123, 125, 187, 221 (n. 463), 271, 276
Martinez, A.P. 164 (n. 152), 179 (n. 241)
Massagetae 49
Matthew of Edessa 15, 344 (n. 44), 347–348
al-Mas'ūdī, Abu'l-Hasan Ali 11–12, 79, 88, 95, 105, 114, 151–152, 182, 184, 187, 192, 194, 204–205, 221 (n. 463), 262–263, 266 (n. 106), 267, 269–276, 282
al-Marwazī, Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir 11, 95, 98, 101, 145–146
Marwan ben Muhammad, Umayyad caliph 80
Ma wara' an-Nahr 39, 89, 104, 169, 224
Mazovia 60
Mecca 221 (n. 465)
Medes 48, 50, 262
Media 49, 55
Medveditsa river 45
Meissen 14
Melanchlaeni 29
Melitene 273
Menges, Karl H. 92–93, 190
Merens 64
Merv, *see* Khorasan
Mescera, *see* Imniscaris
Mesembria 329
Mesopotamia 69, 278
Western 243
Meško, Marek 359–360 (n. 105)
Meszes river 374
Methodius, St, Byzantine missionary 110 (n. 93)
Meysztowicz, Walerian 308
Michael, king of Dioclea 348
Michael the akolouthos 340
Michael Arianites, doux of Paradunavon thema 322, 325–326
Michael Attaleiates, historian 7, 176 (n. 230), 224, 231, 335, 345, 347, 350, 353–354, 363, 370 (n. 150)
Michael Dokeianos, Byzantine commander 231, 339
Michael VII Dukas, Byzantine emperor 236, 349, 352
Michael Glykas, chronicler 8, 346 (n. 52)
Michael Psellos, scholar and statesman 6–7, 179 (n. 242), 197, 200, 203–204, 218, 224–225, 230, 236, 326, 344
Michael the Lithuanian 41
Michael the Syrian, patriarch of the Jacobite Church 15, 368–369
Midas, king of Phrygia 48
Middle Ages 2, 38, 64, 156, 201, 379
High and Late 13, 383
Middle East 48, 50, 163, 232
Middle Kingdom, *see* China
Miechów 40–41, 388
Mieszko I, prince of Poland 303–304
Mieszko II, king of Poland 306 (n. 60)
Migidenos, Byzantine commander 199–200
Migration Period 1, 54, 58
Mikkola, Jooseppi 64 (n. 132)
Minorsky, Vladimir 152, 271
Mircea Vodă 275 (n. 135)
al-Miskawajhi, Abu 'Abd Allah Ibn Yaqub 278 (n. 145), 284
Mithridates VI Eupator, king of Pontus 53, 57
Mius River, *see* Mus River
Möngke Khan, ruler of the Mongols 37, 172 (n. 199)
Moesia 319
Moglena, region and Byzantine thema 225, 366
Mohammed/Muhammad, the Islam prophet 220, 273
Mokry Elanchyk river 42
Moldavia 129, 374, 301
Moldavian Plateau 28
Moldova, Republic of 17
Molochnaia river 119–120
Mongolia 21, 89

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Mongols 2, 66, 140, 145 (n. 76), 160, 165–167, 172 (n. 199), 188–189, 193, 195, 198, 205 (n. 381), 211, 213, 215, 220, 228, 230 (n. 510), 236, 248, 386
Khalkha 165 (n. 164), 167
Mongol Terror, *see* Timor Tartarorum
Moravcsik, Gyula 3, 257
Mordens 64
Mordia 240
Mordvins 64
Moson comitatus 378, 381
Mosul 273
Moszyński, Kazimierz 131
Moundraga 108
Movses Khorenatsi 64 (n. 132)
Mstislav Vladimirovich, prince of Chernigov 315–316
Mugodzhar Hills 97, 100, 103
al-Muqtadir, Abbasid caliph 11, 38, 96, 216–217
Mureş river 30, 68 (n. 156)
Mus river 42
Myrmidons 3
Mysians 3

Nadhir al-Harami, Abbasid ambassador 217
Nagrodzka-Majchrzyk, Teresa 193
Nagyküküllö comitatus 379
Nagyszentmiklós 173 (n. 205), 196
Nalepa, Jerzy 304 (n. 54)
Nandarin, *see* Cherkess
Naparis, *see* Ialomiţa River
Navego 64
Nazarenko, Alexander V. 303 (n. 48), 308 (n. 74), 309 (n. 77), 310 (n. 79)
Nedao river 72
Németh, Josef 155, 173 (n. 205), 190, 206 (n. 385), 375 (n. 170)
Nesebyr, *see* Mesembria
Nessos river 62 (n. 116)
Nestor, monk of the Pechersk Lavra 14–15
Nestor, Byzantine vestarches 350, 352–354, 356
Neuri 29
Neusiedler See, *see* Neusiedl Lake
Neusiedl Lake 378, 381
Nicholas Mystikos, patriarch of Constantinople 9, 258–260, 262, 264
Nida river 389
Nikephoros/Nikephoritzes, logothete 352–353
Nikephoros III Botaneiates, Byzantine emperor 7, 237, 355–357, 359, 365; as doux: 345
Nikephoros Bryennios, historian and soldier 7, 355
Nikephoros Bryennios, doux of Dyrrachion 7, 236–237, 354–355
Nikephoros II Phokas, Byzantine emperor 284–285, 291
Nikephoros rector, Byzantine commander 337–338
Niketas, doux of Belgrade 353
Niketas Choniates, historian 8, 188 (n. 283), 332, 367, 371
Niketas Glabas, commander of Scholai 339
Nikon, patriarch of Moscow 15
Nile river 30
Niš/Naissus/os 62 (n. 116), 170, 224 (n. 481), 319, 327–328, 333, 348, 356
Nitra comitatus 378
Nitra river 378
Nizami of Ganja, Persian poet 233
Nizhny Novgorod 23
Nogai Steppe 45–46
Noonan, Thomas 79 (n. 219), 180 (n. 246)
Normans 357–358
Northern Ocean 34
Northern Uvaly 23
Novgorodians 271
Novgorod Veliki (Novgorod the Great) 15, 293, 295, 310, 312, 314, 317
Novohrod-Siverskyi 387
Novocherkassk culture 47
Novosel'tsev, Anatolii P. 283 (n. 164)
Nufăru 329
Nūkardah 184, 268, 271–272
Nyír comitatus (province) 374

Oaros, *see* Volga River
Obad 372
Obolensky, Dimitri 224, 242, 299 (n. 39)
Ochakiv 42
Octar, Hun king 70
Odărci 320, 329, 350–351
Oder river 59

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Odessa 26
Oghurs/Oghuric tribes 73–74, 76–77
Oghuz/Uzes 17, 86, 88–91, 94, 96–98, 100–101, 103, 104–106, 125–126, 139, 142, 152–153, 169, 171, 180, 182, 184, 195 (n. 324), 201, 202 (n. 371), 207, 212, 216–217, 220, 222, 233, 244, 250–251, 255, 283–284, 300–302, 305, 308, 315–316, 318, 321–322, 325–327, 330–331, 345–347, 360, 369–370, 375, 377–378, 383, 385–386
Oghuz Khan 211
Ohrid 328
Oium 60
Oka river 64
Okroš 320
Olbia 53, 56–57, 61 (n. 106)
Old Continent, *see* Europe
Oleg Sviatoslavovich, Rus' prince 293
Oleshe 183
Oleśnica 388
Olga, Rus' princess 285–286
Oltenia 58
Oltina 320, 329
Olt river 30
Olympia 62
Olympiodorus of Thebes 69
Omurtag, khan of the Danube Bulgars 236
Onegesios 144 (n. 71)
Onogur/Onogurs 73–76
Oral 97
Ordessos, *see* Argeş river
Ordos region 83, 93
Orkhan, the Onogur khan 76
Orkhon river 83
Oskol river 163
Osmos river 334
Ossowski, Stanisław 209 (n. 399)
Oster river 205, 294
Ostrogoths 62–63, 65, 68–69, 73, 84
Otto III, Roman-German emperor 304
Otto of Freising 13
Uliches/Oultines 240, 247–248, 250, 265
Ovče Pole/Eutzoplon 170, 319, 327–328
Ovid 57
Oxus, *see* Amu Darya river

Pagumanis 139
Palacus, king of Lesser Scythia 53
Palestine 49, 69
Pannonia 17, 69, 75, 77, 111, 121, 321
Pantikapes river 30–31
Paradunavon, thema of, *see* Paristrion, thema of
Parczewski, Michał 249 (n. 42), 303
Paristrion, thema of 322, 325–326, 330, 342, 346 (n. 50), 351–353, 356–357, 359, 361–362, 371
Parthia 59
Patzinacia 141–142, 182, 206 (n. 385), 240–241, 246, 248–250, 265, 284, 287, 297, 308, 324, 339–340
Paulicians, dualistic sect 224–225, 358, 361
Paulus Byssenus de Eorghede, ban of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slovenia 383
Pavlovsk 27
Pax Chazarica 65, 78, 84, 117–118, 178, 276, 282–284, 292, 393
Pechenegs 2–19, 23, 36, 81, 84–87, 88–120, 122–127, 129–132, 135–143, 145–160, 162–207, 209–212, 214–267, 271–327, 330–394
Pecheneie 386
Pechenezhyn 386
Pecheniugi 387
Pei-ju 85
Pelliot, Paul 85
Penza 23
Pereg 205 (n. 381)
Pereiaslavl city 383, 386
principality of 385
Pereiaslavets 251, 285
Perekop, Isthmus of 27, 245
Peresechen' 247
Persia (Frs) 1, 51, 73–75, 80, 108, 112, 171, 278 (n. 145)
Persian Empire, *see* Persia
Pervomaisk 27
Pesah, Khazar commander 278–279, 282
Pest comitatus 379, 381–382
Peter I, Bulgarian tsar 257, 276
Philip II, king of Macedonia 52
Philippopolis 205, 329, 334, 358–360, 364
Phocaea 365
Phrygia 48
Piasts/Piast dynasty 302–307, 310–311, 316, 387–390
Pieczeniegi 388

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Pieczonogi 388
Pieczonóg-Gacki 388
Pilis comitatus 379, 381–382
Pithyus 62
Pletneva, Svetlana A. 146, 149 (n. 87), 153, 156–157, 159 (n. 129), 162, 190, 194, 196, 249 (n. 42)
Pliny the Elder 35, 55, 61
Pliska 196, 329, 345 (n. 46)
Po river 71
Podolian Upland 303
Pohl, Walter 1
Pokutia (region) 386
Pokutian-Bessarabian Upland, *see* Moldavian Plateau
Polans 254
Poland 17–18, 42, 114, 287, 303–305, 307, 312, 316, 331, 373, 388–390
Poles 294, 313–314
Polesie Lowland 25
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 41, 43
Polish state, *see* Poland
Polovoi, N.Ia. 275 (n. 135)
Polovtsy 98
Poltava 27
Polybius, historian 55
Pomerania 59–60
Pomponius Mela, geographer 35
Pontic sea, *see* Black Sea
Pontic steppe, *see* Black Sea steppe
Pontus, region on the southern cost of the Black Sea 53, 57
Pontos/Pontos Euxeinos, *see* Black Sea
Popina-Gradiščeto 320, 329
Poppe, Andrzej 183 (n. 258), 299 (n. 38), 307, 310 (n. 79)
Prague 305
Presian, Bulgar khan 111, 220
Preslav 108, 253, 257, 264, 329, 334, 340
Pretich 197 (n. 340), 229
Priscos of Panion 72–74, 144 (n. 71)
Pritsak, Omeljan 16, 87–89, 91, 94, 113, 144, 156, 159 (n. 129), 186 (n. 272), 249 (n. 42)
Procopius of Caesarea, historian 8
Propontis, *see* Marmara, Sea of
Protogenes 56
Prut river 28, 30, 122–123, 129, 169, 243–244, 247–248, 250–251, 301
Přemyslid monarchy, *see* Czech monarchy
Přemyslids dynasty 305
Przemyśl 247, 386
Przemyśl Gate 305
Pyretos, *see* Prut River

Quedlinburg 304

Raab-Györ comitatus 378
Rába river 378
Radimichi 294
Rahewin of Freising 13
Raoul, monk of the Cambrai abbey 13, 163
Rashid al-Din, Persian historian 386
Rasovskii, Dmitrii A. 316, 369, 384, 386
Ravenna 77
Regensburg 305
Regino of Prüm 12–13, 110–111, 120, 234 (n. 529–530)
Reinbern, bishop of Kołobrzeg 310
Reut river 247–248
Rha river, *see* Volga river
Rhaidestos 329, 364
Riade 274 (n. 133)
Riphean mountains 31
Rivne 26, 247
Roas, Hun king 70
Robert Guiscard, duke of Apulia and Calabria 357
Rodman, Pecheneg prince 296 (n. 21)
Rodnia 293–294
Rodulphus, *see* Raoul
Rogas 64
Roger of Torre Maggiore 205 (n. 381)
Roman Empire/Rome 58, 60–63, 65, 68–69, 268, 270
  Eastern 70
  Western 66, 70–71, 215
Romanchuk, Alla 299 (n. 40)
Romania, *see* Byzantium
Romania, Republic of 17
Romanos I Lekapenos, Byzantine emperor 4–5, 260 (n. 81), 261, 263–264, 266, 269–270, 272–273, 275–277, 279–280
Romanos II, Byzantine emperor 4–5, 291
Romanos III Argyros, Byzantine emperor 319

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Romanos IV Diogenes, Byzantine emperor 347–349, as startegos: 347
Romans, *see* Byzantines
Romny culture 247 (n. 36)
Rome city 307
Róna-Tas, András 95 (n. 40)
Ros' river 293, 298, 316, 385–386
Rotten Sea, *see* Sivash
Rouran 75
Rousion 329, 364
Roux, Jean-Paul 145–146 (n. 76)
Roxolani 33, 57–58
Ruga, *see* Roas
Rugila, *see* Roas
Rujno 320
Runciman, Steven 254 (n. 55)
Rurik dynasty/Rurikids 84, 183, 207, 248, 252, 254, 267, 277, 280–281, 293, 296, 299, 302, 311, 318, 383–384, 387, 392
Rusa I, king of the Urartu 48
Rusa II, king of the Urartu 48
Rus' 5, 13–15, 17, 35, 81, 84, 92, 105, 132, 142, 145, 159–160, 163, 166, 170–171, 180–184, 189–191, 201, 203, 205–207, 218, 221 (n. 464), 223, 234, 236, 240, 242, 246–248, 250, 252–254, 258, 264–267, 272, 275, 277–282, 284–290, 293–302, 304, 306–307, 309–311, 314–318, 321, 327, 331, 369, 377, 383–390, 392
Russia/ Russian Empire 1, 20, 41
Ibn Rusta, Ahmad 10–11, 99–100, 102, 113–114, 146, 179, 186
Ruta river 385

Sabartoi asphaloi 108, 112–114, 116–118, 121, 124
Sabir/Sabirs 73–75, 77
Sagyz river 103
Ibn Sa'id, Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Musa 12, 156
Saioi 56–57
Saitaphernes, ruler of the Saioi 56
Sajó river 379
as-Sakaliba, *see* Slavs/Slavic tribes
Sakov 385
Salhir river 27
Sal'or, *see* Oghuz
Saltovo-Maiaki culture 59, 78–79, 120, 246
Salzman, Philip C. 208 (n. 393)
Samandar 282
Samanids/Samanid dynasty 10, 94 (n. 36), 104–105, 125, 152
Samara river 55, 103
Samarkand 82, 172 (n. 199)
Samos island 365
Samuel Bourtzes, Byzantine commander 338
San river 303
Sandomierz 316
Saqlab, *see* Slavs/Slavic tribes
Saracens 163
Saragur 73
Saraili-Kiyat 202 (n. 371)
Saratov 99
Sarkel 36, 81, 90–91, 97, 124, 164, 180, 221 (n. 465), 241, 245, 251, 281–282, 284
Sarmatia
  European 35, 40–41,
  Asian 35, 40–41
Sarmatians/Sarmatian tribes 29, 33–34, 50, 53–61, 63
  Royal, *see* Saioi
Sarpeta 45
Sartach, Batu Khan's son 220
Saudarmatae 57
Sauromatae/Sauromatians, *see* Sarmatians
'Sauromatians' 359
Sava river 348, 379
as-Savardiya 113
Sárvíz river 379–381
Schmitt, Oliver 333 (n. 5)
Schultheiss, Franz G. 209 (n. 399)
Sclavonians, *see* Slavs/Slavic tribes
Scupi 356
Scylitzes Continuatus 6, 138
Scythia 28–33, 35, 51, 55, 60–61, 64, 111
  Great 53
  Lesser 53, 72
  Old 50, 244–245
Scythian Neapolis 54
Scythians/Scythian tribes 1, 3, 28–29, 32–34, 47 (n. 2), 48–56, 59, 62, 81, 84, 163, 168, 208, 232
'Scythians' 170, 185, 188 (n. 283), 192, 199–200, 233, 262, 264, 332, 347, 350, 353–354, 356, 359–362, 367–370, 375
  Hellenic Scythians 51

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Royal Scythians 51, 92, 185, 208, 210, 214, 245
Scythian-farmers 50
Scythian-tillers 50
Taurian/Crimean Scythians 54, 57
Second Scythian Kingdom, *see* Old Scythia
Sedov, Valentin 247 (n. 36)
Seine 37
Selenga river 83, 167
Seleucides, Hellenistic dynasty 56
Seljuks 149, 333–334, 347, 357
Selte, Pecheneg chief 334, 344
Semirechie 105
Serbia 170, 271
Serbs 261
Serdica, *see* Sofia
Seretos, *see* Siret
Serica, *see* China
'Serpent's Wall' 205, 298 (n. 31)
Sevan Lake 87
Severus Alexander, Roman emperor 61 (n. 106)
Severians 247
Sev-Ogrik 113
Sevordik 112–113
Sevortioi 112
Sewter, Robert A. 199
Shalkar Lake 97, 103, 152 (n. 101)
Shalkar III 201
Shamkur 113
Shchavelev, Aleksei 4
Shepard, Jonathan 229 (n. 506), 315 (n. 107)
Siberia 20, 21, 73, 226
Sidera Pass 329, 337, 360, 362
Sikenica river 378
Silesia 305
Silva Blacorum et Bissenorum 379
Silva Pieczyngarum 304
Sima Qian 208, 214, 232
Simbirsk Governorate 115
Simon of Kéza 14, 374–375
Siraces 58
Siret river 30, 122–123, 129, 169, 248
Sirmium 319, 328
Sivash 27
Skala 320
Skandza 59
Skarzhinskaia, Elena Ch. 65 (n. 135)
Skilurus, king of the Crimean Lesser Scythia 53
Skrynnikova, Tatiana 140
Skyles, king of the Scythians 52 (n. 36)
Slavs/Slavic tribes 98–99, 130, 170, 180, 182, 209, 240, 244, 265, 270, 295, 342, 349
Slon 243 (n. 11)
Slovakia 305, 378, 382
Slovenia 383
S-m-k-r-ts/Samkerts 278
Smyrna 365
Sneath, David 135 (n. 35)
Snorri Sturluson 370 (n. 150)
Sofia 170, 224 (n. 481), 271, 319, 327–328, 333–334, 344, 347
Sok river 103
Sokal 247
Solomon, king of Hungary 348, 361, 374, 376–377, 381
Somogy comitatus 379
Sopron comitatus 378
Soultzous, Pecheneg chief 339
Soutzoun, Pecheneg chief 334
Sounion Cape 29
Southal, Aidan 159 (n. 128)
Spain 58, 268, 270, 272
Spali 60–61
Sparta 62
Spinei, Victor 18–19, 156, 171 (n. 197), 174 (n. 212), 180 (n. 246), 314 (n. 105), 373 (n. 164)
Središte 320
Sremska Mitrovica, *see* Szerém
Srubnaia culture 54
Stara Zagora, *see* Beroia
Staro-Shvedskoie 202 (n. 371)
Staszów 388
Stavropolskaia Upland 25
Stephen I, king of Hungary 14, 307, 318, 373–374, 377, 380, 382–383
Stephen II, king of Hungary 370, 380
Stephen Lekapenos, Byzantine co-emperor 4
Stephen, magister, Byzantine dignitary 263
Stephenson, Paul 184, 296 (n. 25)
St Eterius island 245
Steuer, Heiko 155 (n. 108)

Aleksander Paroń - 978-90-04-44109-5
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St George, southern branch of the Danube Delta 329
St George of Cappadocia 262
St Gregory island 242
Strabo of Amaseia 32–34, 55, 57, 161–162, 166
Strâmba river 68 (n. 156)
Strwiąż river 304
Strzelczyk, Jerzy 65 (n. 135)
St Tarasios, Monastery of 334
Stugna river 205–206, 247, 294, 316
Subcarpathia 305
Sudak 37
Sui dynasty 75, 85
Sula river 44, 205–206, 247, 294–295, 298, 316
Suleiman, sultan of Rum 365
Sulina, branch of the Danube Delta 242, 245, 250, 329
Šumen 320
Sumatra 40
Supoi river 44
Sura river 23
Suzdal principality 384
Sveneld, Sviatoslav Igorevich's voivode 290
Sviatopolk I, the Rus' prince 223, 309–315, 373, 388
Sviatoslav I Igorevich, the Rus' prince 5, 191, 193, 206, 218, 229, 234, 235 (n. 533), 280–282, 284–293, 297, 317
Sviatoslav Vladimirovich, Rus' prince 310, 312
Sviiaga river 23
Simeon I, Bulgarian tsar 9, 108–109, 126, 235–236, 245, 253, 255–264, 266, 271, 276, 291
Simeon the Logothete, chronicler 5
Syngoul river, *see* Donets
Syr-Darya river 31, 49, 58 (n. 76), 82, 86, 88–90, 93
Syria 15, 49, 69, 276, 318, 347
Syrmia, *see* Szerém
Syroukalpeï 138, 142, 240, 249, 251
Székelys 187 (n. 278), 379
Szerém Sremska Mitrovica) comitatus 379
Szydłów 388
Szymański, Wojciech 180 (n. 243), 247 (n. 36), 389 (n. 249)
Szynkiewicz, Sławoj 174 (n. 211)
Świętosławski, Witold 198, 306 (n. 60), 389

Tambov Governorate 115
Tadzans 64
Taganrog Bay 24
Taiči'ut 230 (n. 510)
Taksony, Hungarian prince 372
Talas 172 (n. 199)
Talmat, *see* Borotalmat
Taman Peninsula 27, 52, 277–278
Tamerlane, *see* Amir Timur
Tami, 'Scythian' commander 347
Tanais, Greek colony 61
Tanais river, *see* Don river
Tănase, Daniela 174 (n. 211, 212)
Tang dynasty 75
Tangier 39
Târgu Mures, *see* Maros Vásárhely
Tashkent 82, 87–88
Tarim river 83
Basin 83
Tartar, Cuman chief 370, 377
Tatar Khanates 42
Tatars 41–43, 167, 189, 191 (n. 297), 219, 230 (n. 510), 306 (n. 60)
Tatikios, Byzantine commander 360–361, 364
Tatranes, a Pecheneg 229
Tatus (also Tatos), commander of Dristra 352–353, 359, 362
Tauri 29, 34
Tauris, *see* Crimea
Taurokomos 364
Tekerőpatak, *see* Strâmba River
Temujin, *see* Genghis Khan
Terebovlia 386
Terek river 25, 82
Tervingi, *see* Visigoths
Teterev river 206
Teutons 172 (n. 199)
Theodore Dafnopates 260 (n. 81)
Theodore Prodromos 369–370
Theodoric, ruler of the Ostrogoths 73
Theodosius II, Roman emperor 69–72
Theophanes, commander of Byzantine fleet 278
Theophanes Confessor, chronicler 5–6

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Theophanes Continuatus 5
Theophilos, archbishop of Euchaita 289–291, 317
Theophylact, archbishop of Ohrid 9, 188 (n. 281), 363
Thermopylae 74
Thessalonika, thema of 319
Thessaloniki city 36, 163 (n. 149), 256, 328–329, 345, 355
Thietmar of Merseburg 13, 237, 304, 311, 313, 389
Thiudos 64
Thomas of Split 199 (n. 346)
Thonuzoba, Pecheneg chief 372, 377, 382–383
Thrace 62 (n. 116), 69–70, 192, 231, 271, 320, 339–340, 353–354, 358, 361, 364, 367
  thema of 337
Thracian Chersonese 365
Thucydides of Athens, historian 8
Thyssamatae 57
Tian Shan 82–83
Tiarantos, *see* Olt river
Tiasmin 247
Tiber river 41
Tibet 83, 93
T'ie-lê 73, 76, 85
Tien-Shan mountains 22, 73
Timber-grave culture, *see* Srubnaia culture
Timor Tartarorum 2
Timoshchuk, Boris A. 247 (n. 36)
Tisza river 68 (n. 156), 71, 244, 372, 379–380, 393
Tiverians 247, 265
Tmutarakan principality 183, 251, 277–279, 281–282, 298–299, 315, 327
Tobol river 98
Tocharians 87
Togortak, Cuman chief 365
Tokmak river 119
Tolna comitatus 379–380, 382
Tonyukuk, Turkic leader 214
Toplitzos 340
Torchesk 385
Torks, *see* Oghuz (Uzes)
Tourkia, *see* Hungary
Toynbee, Arnold J. 3
Transcaucasia, *see* South Caucasus
Transdniester Region 44
Transoxania, *see* Ma wara' an-Nahr
Transvolga Region 23, 78, 89, 94, 96, 98, 100 (n. 64), 129, 179, 222
  steppe 38, 94
Transylvania 68, 373–375, 379, 382
Traulos, leader and follower of the Paulicianism 224 (n. 481), 358–360
Trenčín comitatus 378
Treri 48
Triballi 57
Troullos, *see* Dniester
Trubezh river 205, 294–295, 314, 316
Tryjarski, Edward 18–19, 120, 149 (n. 87), 156–157, 180 (n. 246), 200
Tsaritsyn, *see* Volgograd
Türgäsh 88
Tula 26, 247
Tulcea 320, 329
Turkic Khaganate 75, 94, 148
  Western 93–94
  Eastern 94
Turkish Sultanate 41
Turkmens 211
Turcoaia-Troesmis 320, 329
Turks (general term for Turkic peoples) 198, 262, 269–270, 272–273, 284
Turks, *see* Magyars
Turks Orkhon 88–89
Turov 310
Turpei 385
Tuva 83, 165 (n. 164)
Tyrach, Pecheneg chief 151, 153–154, 157, 186 (n. 272), 195 (n. 324), 223, 230–231, 238, 321–323, 325–327, 331–332, 335–337, 339, 341–342, 345, 359, 375–376
Tyras, Greek colony 61
Tyres river, *see* Dniester river
Tyszkiewicz, Jan 302–303 (n. 47), 387 (n. 242)
Tzakhas, emir of Smyrna 365
Tzelgu, chief of 'Scythians' 361
Tzopon, *see* Boulatzopon
Tzour, *see* Kouartzitzour
Tzouroulon/Tzurul 329, 364

Ufa 100
Ugor 73

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Uil river 103
Ukraine 20, 25, 43–44, 60
Ukrainian Plate, *see* Black Sea Plate
Ulan Bator 21
Uldis (Ulti), Hun ruler 69, 70
Ungroi, *see* Magyars
Unstrut river 274 (n. 133)
Ural river 36, 39, 77, 82, 95 (n. 40), 96–97, 103, 121, 251
Urals/Ural mountains 22, 55, 64–65, 97–98, 121
Ural'sk, *see* Oral
Urartu state 48
Urgench, *see* Jurjāniyyah
Urgi 57
Urugundi 62
Ustyurt Plateau 39, 95, 103
Utigurs 74
Uyghurs/Uyghur Khagante 15, 85–86, 89–91, 93–94, 211
Uzia 138, 240

Vachkova, Veselina 76 (n. 210)
Váh river 378
Vainshtein, Sergei 165 (n. 164)
Valentinian III, Roman emperor 71
Valkó comitatus 379
Várady, László 112, 121
Varangians 35, 92, 180, 182, 191, 242, 252, 254, 265, 266 (n. 106), 283, 293, 297, 313, 318, 340
Variazhko 294
Vardar river 225, 328, 366
Varna 44, 329
Vas comitatus 378
Vasil'evo 295
Vasilievskii, Vasili 224
Vasinabroncae 64
Vasylko, duke of Terebovlia 386
Vékony, Gábor 121
Velikopotemkin Island 183, 298
Venedas/Veneti 59, 64
Veszprém comitatus 378
Viatichev 298
Viatichi 247, 282, 294–295
Viatka river 23
Vidin 328
Viminatium 144 (n. 71)
Visigoths 62–63, 68–69
Vistula river 35, 41, 59–60, 304–305, 388
Vlachs 314 (n. 105), 379
Vladimir I, prince of Rus' 183, 205–206, 221 (n. 464), 223, 293–301, 306–312, 315–316, 318, 327
Vladimir II Monomakh, prince of Rus' 369, 384, 387
Völkerwanderung, *see* Migration Period
Voin' 298
Volga
  Region 11, 17–18, 23–24, 45, 55, 64, 74, 100–103, 106, 112–114, 117, 119, 121, 124, 283
  river 23, 31, 35–37, 40–41, 45, 49, 55, 58, 64–66, 77–78, 80, 82, 89, 93, 95–97, 99, 102, 106–107, 110, 121, 126–127, 178, 210, 244, 251, 266 (n. 106), 282
  Steppe 23
  Upland 23
Volgograd 23, 45
Volhynia 60, 386
Volodimir-Volins'kii 247
Voronezh river 202 (n. 371), 247–248
Voronova Zavora, Dnieper rapid 43
Vorskla river 248
Vyatichians, *see* Viatichi

Walandar (*W.l.nd.r.*) 151, 187, 192, 194, 196, 203–205, 221 (n. 463), 262–263, 268–271, 273–276
Wallachia 69, 129, 244, 249
Warsaw 41
Wei Zheng, historian 85
Wenskus, Reinhard 208, 219
Western Siberian Highlands, *see* Siberia
Wielbark culture 60
Wild Fields, *see* Black See steppes
Wilhelm Buchier, 172 (n. 199)
William of Rubruck 37–38, 172 (n. 199), 176 (n. 229), 220, 248
Winitar/Vinitharius, *see* Witimir
Wiślica 389
Witimir 68
Wolfram, Herwig 62
Wrocław 36
Wusen 211

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Xi'an, *see* Chang'an
Xinjiang 21
Xiongnu 67, 148, 168, 186 (n. 272), 187 (n. 278), 208, 210–211, 214–216, 232

Yaik river, *see* Ural river
Yambol, *see* Dampolis
Ibn Yaqub, Ibrahim 12, 130, 282
Yassians, *see* Alans
Youmalan 116
Yüeh-chih, *see* Yuezhi
Yuezhi 87

Zadonets Steppe 24–25, 42, 45
Zajączkowski, Ananiasz 65 (n. 136), 78
Zakrzewski, Stanisław 303
Zala comitatus 378
Zenon I, Byzantine emperor 73
Zhitomyr 26, 247
Zhetysu, *see* Semirechie
Zhivkov, Boris 79 (n. 219)
Zhonghang Yue, Chinese renegade 214
Zichia 181–183
Zimonyi, István 77 (n. 211), 101 (n. 69), 221 (n. 464)
Zlatarski, Vasil 366 (n. 136)
Zmievy Valy, *see* 'Serpent's Wall'
Zoe Karbonopsina, Byzantine empress 259, 261–263
Zoodt river, *see* Cód river
Zopyrion, Alexander the Great's general 53, 56
Zosimos of Panopolis, historian 66
Zuckerman, Constantine 254 (n. 57), 278 (n. 145)
Zultan, Hungarian Pechenegs' leader 381–382
Zvenigorod 386
Zygmunt II August, king of Poland 41–42
Žitava river 378
Žitný Ostrov (Great Rye Island) 378

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